9
DUBU
(REDICE STUDIO)
Original Story by
CHUGONG
Adapted by
h-goon
Solo Leveling

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CHARACTERS

Jinwoo Sung

S-rank Hunter,
Ahjin Guild

Jinho Yoo

D-rank Hunter,
Ahjin Guild

Yuri Orloff

S-rank Hunter,
Barrier Specialist

Shigeo Matsumoto

President of the Hunter's
Association of Japan

Haein Cha

S-rank Hunter,
Hunters Guild

Jongin Choi

S-rank Hunter,
Hunters Guild

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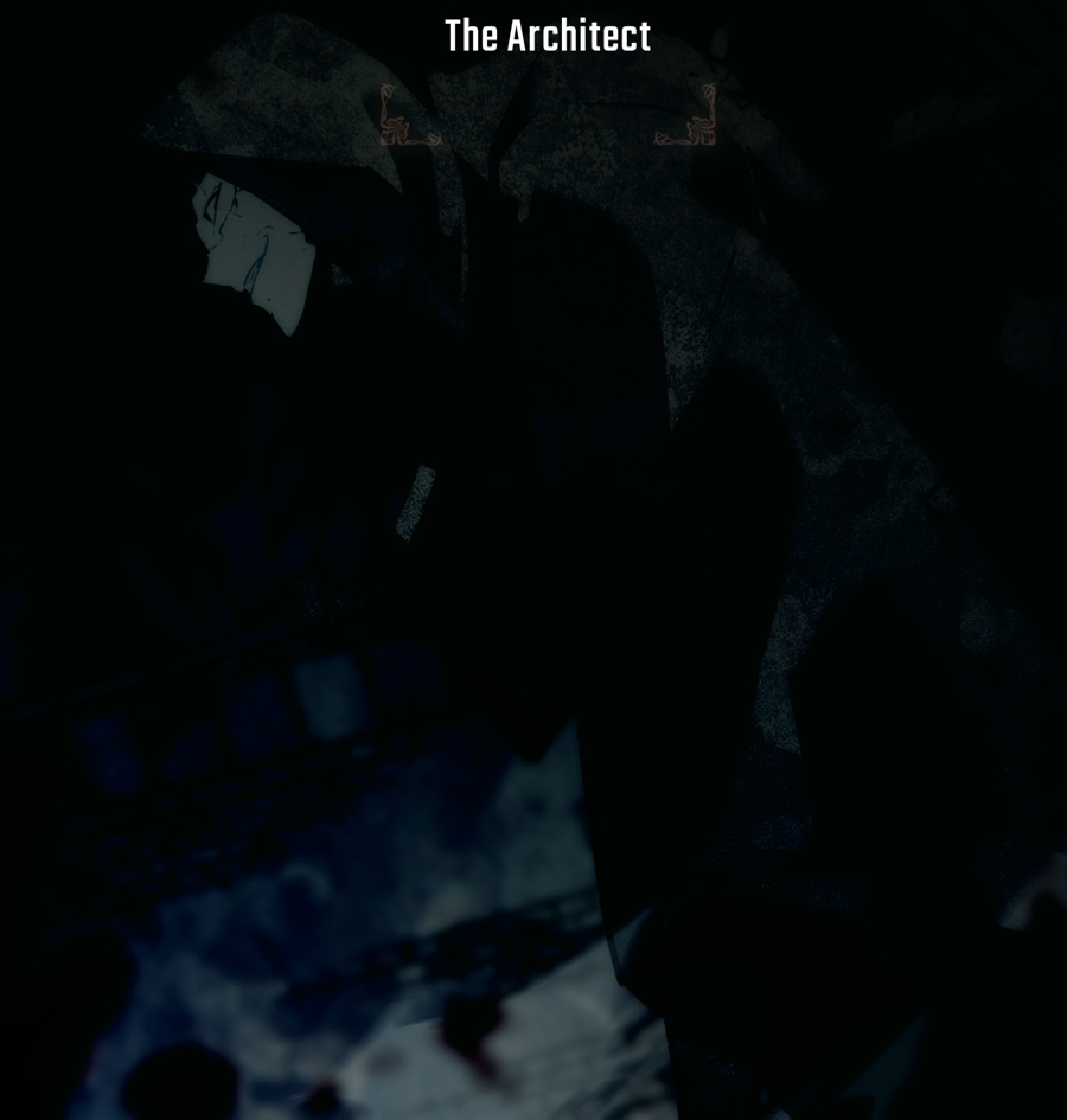
Solo Leveling

CHAPTER 25

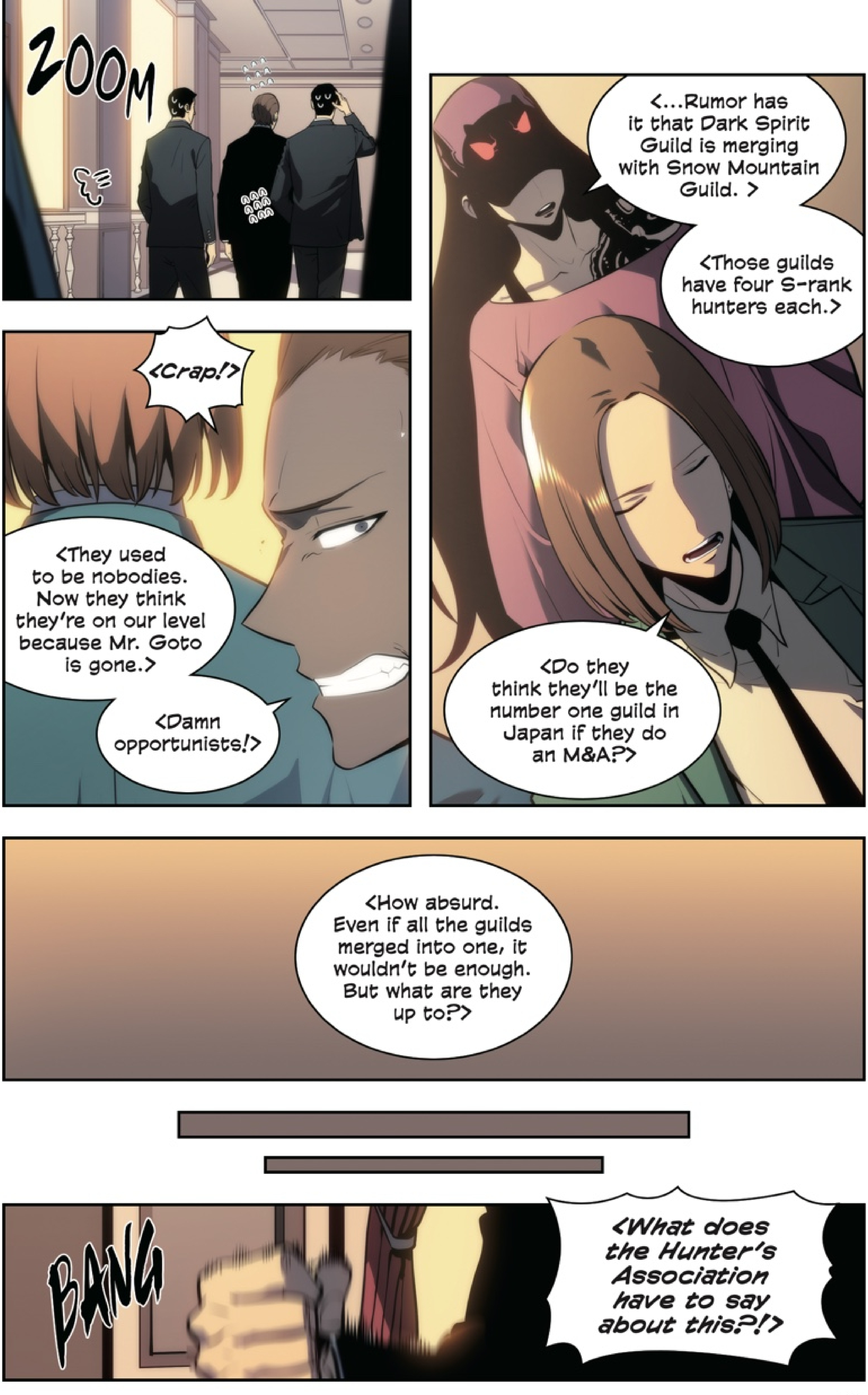
The Architect



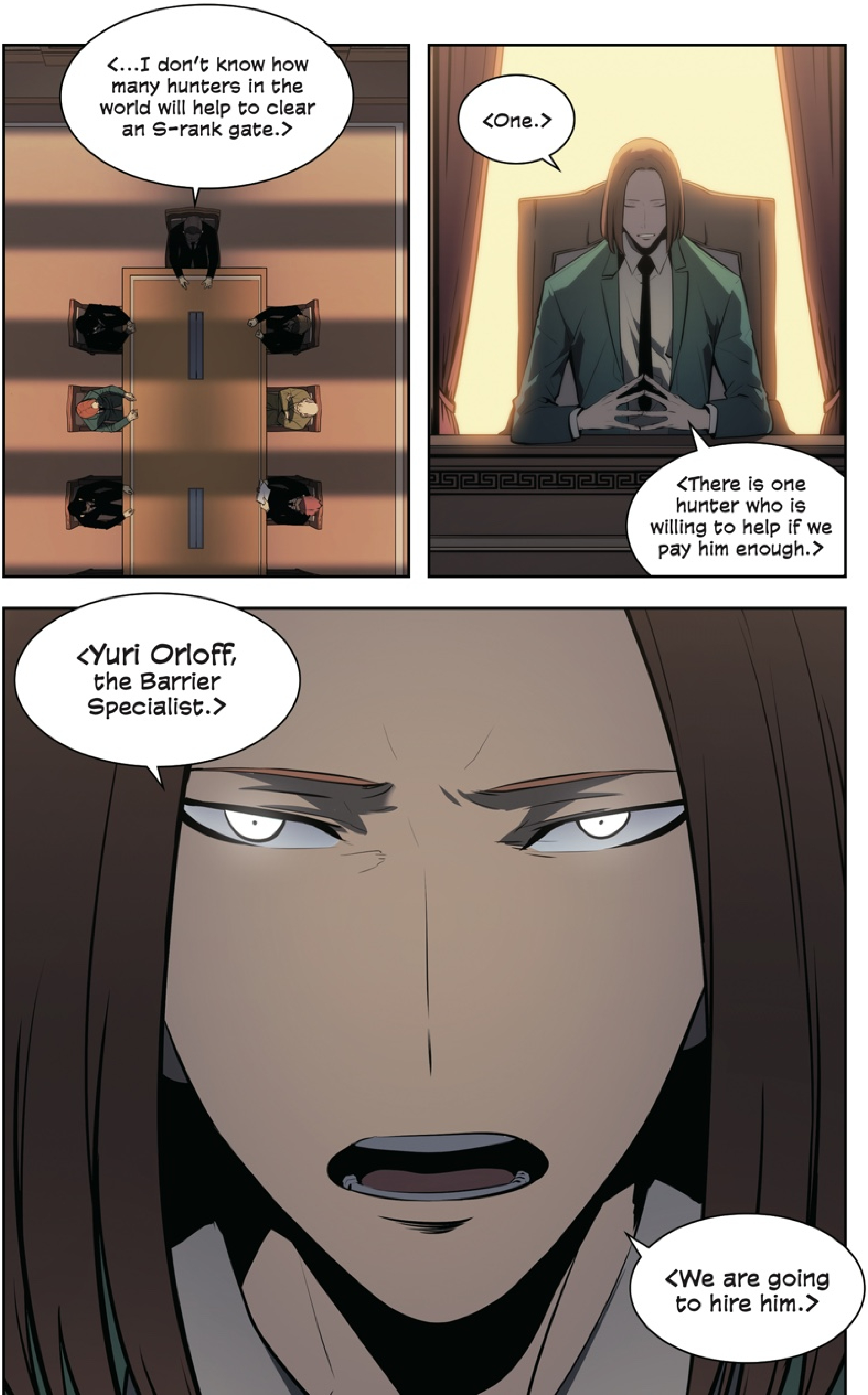
Solo
Leveling

<Drawn Sword, Dark Spirit, the Overload, and even Snow Mountain...>
<All the large guild masters in Japan have been summoned.>
<This is not good.>
<Uh-oh...! Look there!>
<It's Reiji Sugimoto, vice master of the Drawn Sword Guild?!>
<With their main S-rank hunters!>
<He's guild master now, not vice master, dummy.>

<They lost seven S-rank hunters, including Ryuji Goto, in the Jeju Island raid.>
<Apparently because they were acting as Matsumoto's puppets.>
<They've monopolized S-rank hunters, so serves them right.>
<The Drawn Sword Guild is done.>
<If all goes well, we could be the best guild in Ja—>
HALT

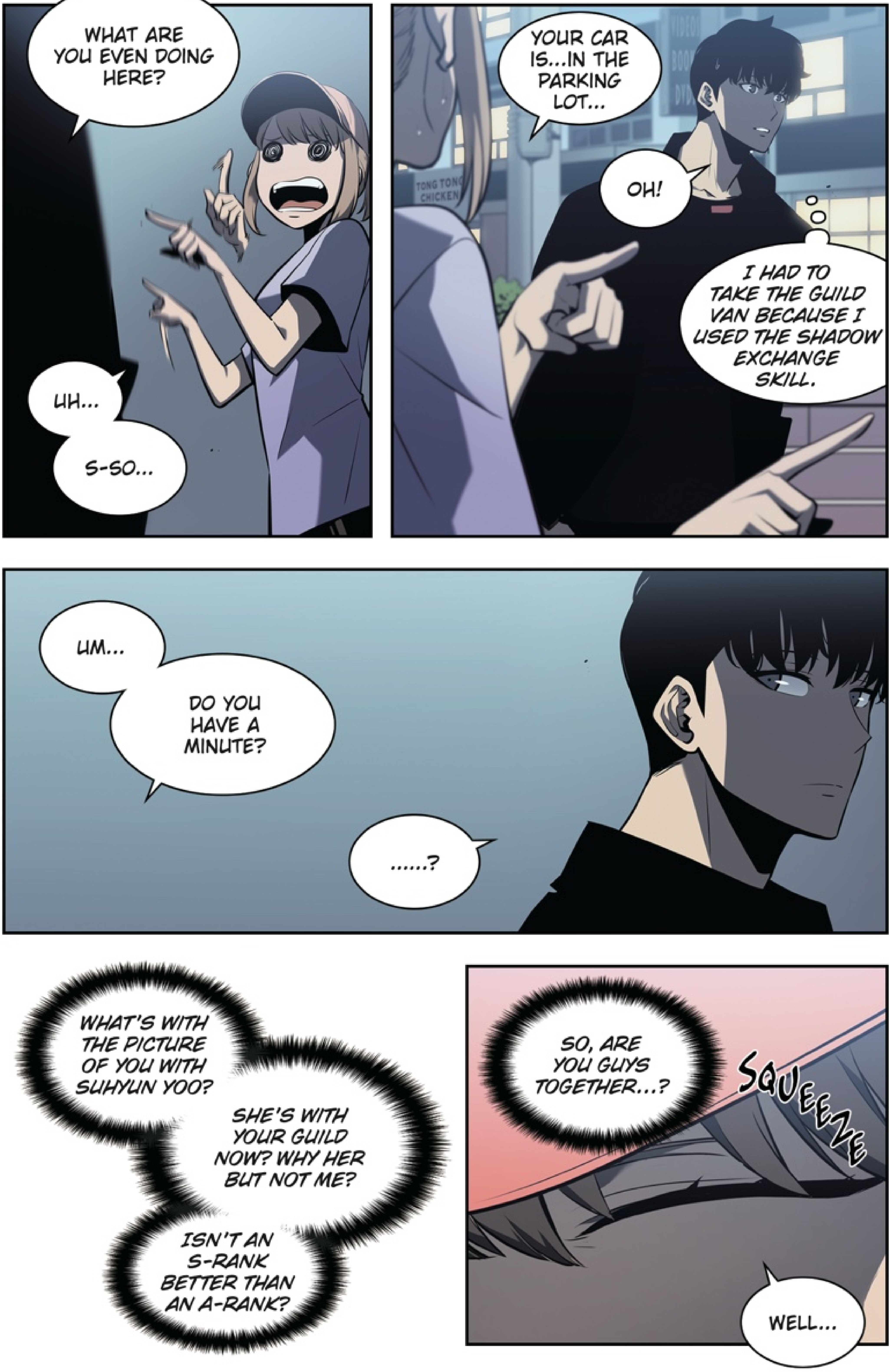

ZOOM
<Crap!>
<They used to be nobodies. Now they think they're on our level because Mr. Goto is gone.>
<Damn opportunists!>
<...Rumor has it that Dark Spirit Guild is merging with Snow Mountain Guild. >
<Those guilds have four S-rank hunters each.>
<Do they think they'll be the number one guild in Japan if they do an M&A?>
<How absurd. Even if all the guilds merged into one, it wouldn't be enough. But what are they up to?>
BANG
<What does the Hunter's Association have to say about this?!>

<What do you mean, the association has no countermeasure for an S-rank gate appearing smack-dab in the middle of Tokyo?>
<Be honest with me! What happens if it explodes?!>
<Mr. Prime Minister, we've brought the guild masters of the largest guilds here. Do not ask any stupid questions.>
<If you saw Jeju Island, then you know what the outcome will be.>
<We can't handle an S-rank gate with only S-rank hunters.>
<Unless we summon a national-level hunter...>
<All I hear is pessimism. Do you have any actual plans?>
<How about hiring Thomas Andre?>
<Do you think we have the funds to hire Thomas Andre?>
<Besides, only a handful of nations will allow their hunters to work for another country because of the increased appearances of gates.>

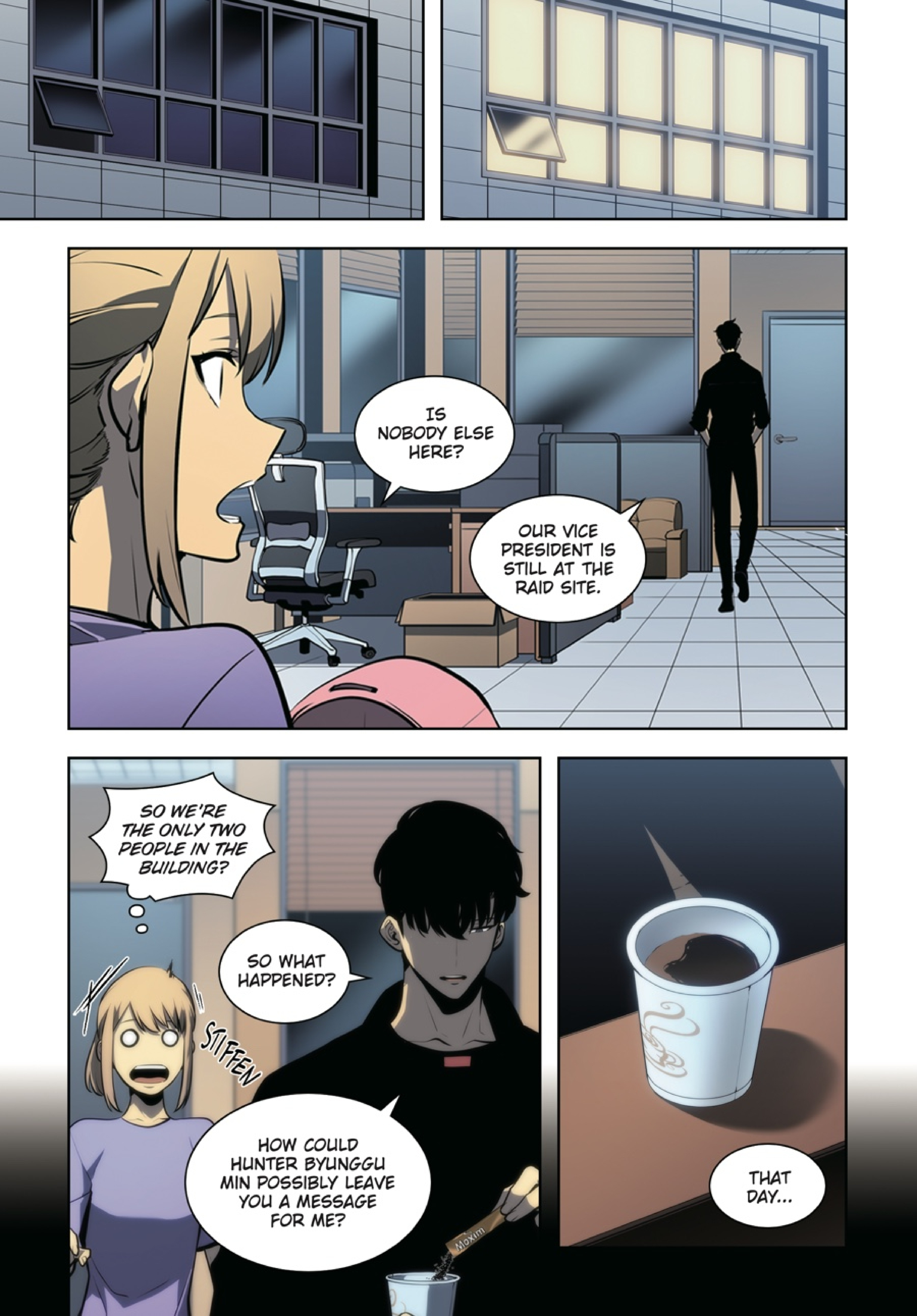

<...I don't know how many hunters in the world will help to clear an S-rank gate.>
<One.>
<There is one hunter who is willing to help if we pay him enough.>
<Yuri Orloff, the Barrier Specialist.>
<We are going to hire him.>

I'M AT LEVEL 101 NOW.
VROOOM
CARTENON TEMPLE'S KEY WAS REVEALED AT LEVEL 100.
AND MY EXCLUSIVE SKILLS WERE UPGRADED AT LEVEL 101.
I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS AT LEVEL 102.
I WONDER IF JINHO IS DOING OKAY.
IT'S GREAT THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT IS EAGER TO GET THINGS DONE, BUT WE NEED TO HIRE SOME—
HUH?

AH!
DENTIST
FWIP
SHOOP
AHHH!
WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY AS SOON AS YOU SAW ME?


WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING HERE?
UH...
S-SO...
YOUR CAR IS...IN THE PARKING LOT...
OH!
I HAD TO TAKE THE GUILD VAN BECAUSE I USED THE SHADOW EXCHANGE SKILL.
UM...
DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
......?
WHAT'S WITH THE PICTURE OF YOU WITH SUHYUN YOO?
SHE'S WITH YOUR GUILD NOW? WHY HER BUT NOT ME?
ISN'T AN S-RANK BETTER THAN AN A-RANK?
SO, ARE YOU GUYS TOGETHER...?
SQUEEZE
WELL...

...HUNTER BYUNGGU MIN REALLY WANTED ME TO RELAY SOMETHING TO YOU.
SOMETHING REGARDING YOUR ABILITIES.
HOLD ON, PLEASE.
LET'S GO UP AND TALK.


IS NOBODY ELSE HERE?
OUR VICE PRESIDENT IS STILL AT THE RAID SITE.
SO WE'RE THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE IN THE BUILDING?
SO WHAT HAPPENED?
STIFFEN
HOW COULD HUNTER BYUNGGU MIN POSSIBLY LEAVE YOU A MESSAGE FOR ME?
Maxim
THAT DAY...

I HEARD A VOICE.
GRAB
...HE POSSESSES.
HE MUST BE CAREFUL OF THE POWER HE POSSESSES.

SOMEONE PULLED ME UP FROM THE ENDLESS DARKNESS.
BUT I WASN'T MYSELF.
I WAS CONSCIOUS, MY IDENTITY RESTORED, BUT...
...IT FELT LIKE I HAD BECOME A LOYAL SERVANT WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE WAS LIVING FOR HIM.
IT WAS FRIGHTENING JUST HOW DELIRIOUSLY HAPPY I WAS BY THAT PROSPECT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?
HIS POWER IS GREATER AND MORE MENACING THAN HE KNOWS.
HE MUST BE MADE AWARE.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT...
...HUNTER SUNG'S ARMY IS...
HIS TRUE ARMY IS...!

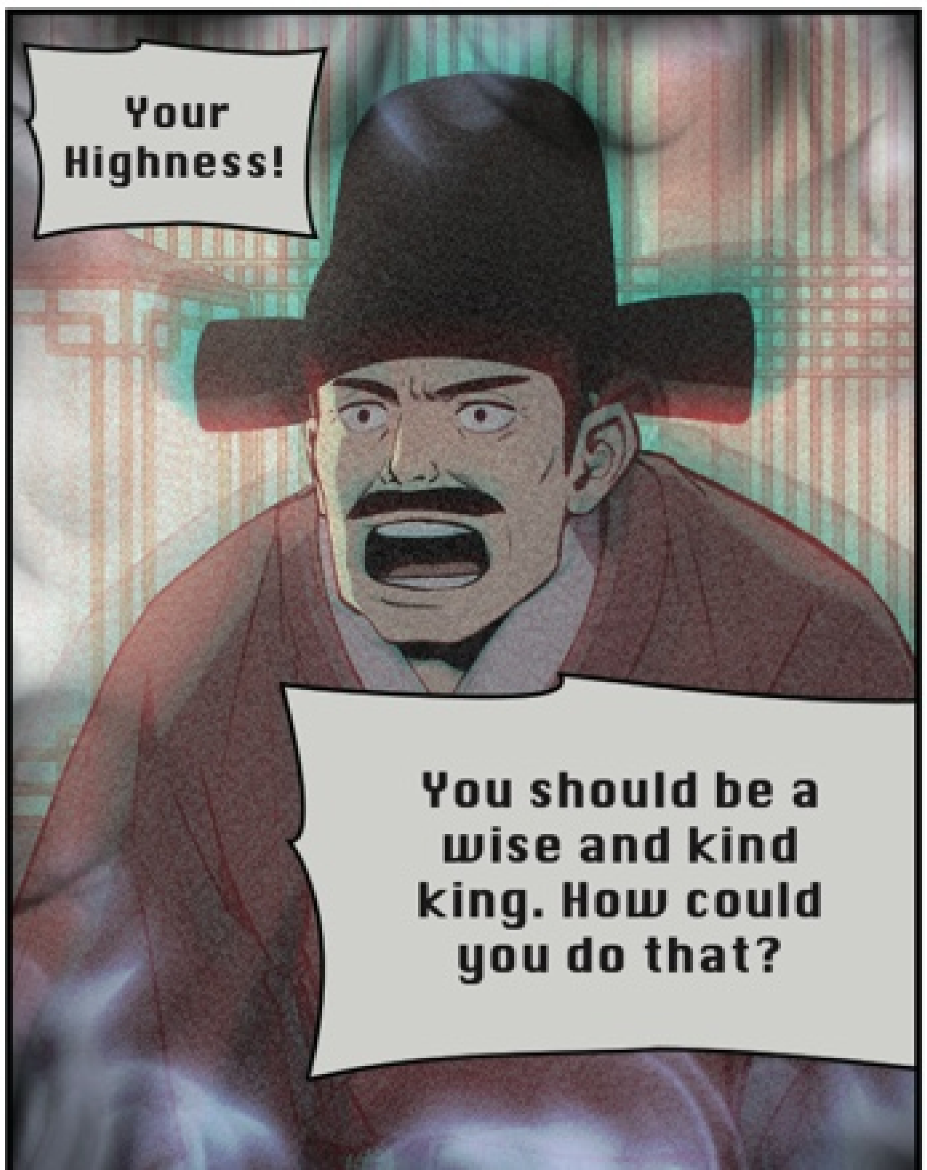
IS WHAT HUNTER CHA TOLD ME TRUE?

TRUE OR NOT, I NEED TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE REAL NATURE OF MY POWER.
THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN POWERING UP.

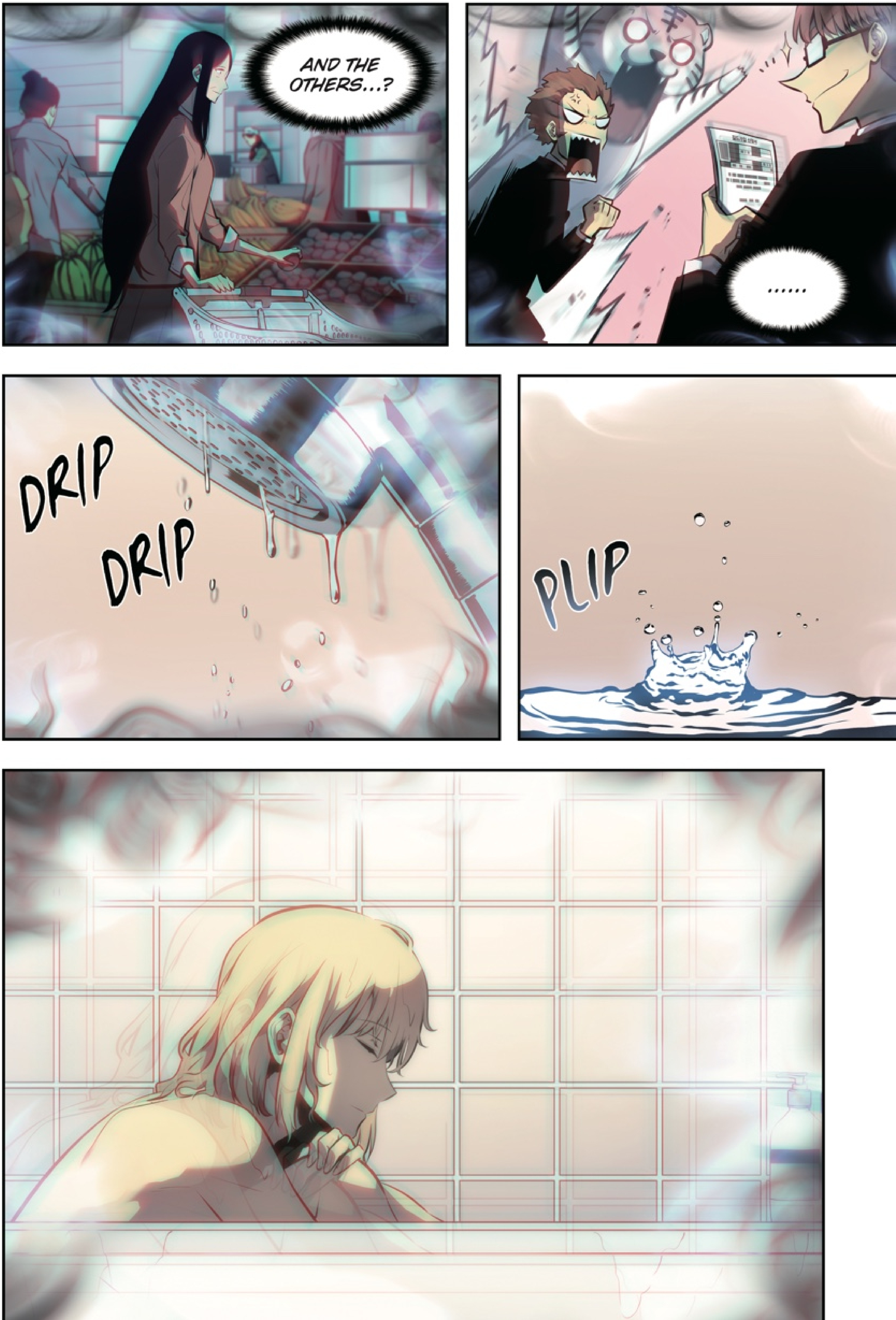
EATING LUNCH LIKE THIS REMINDS ME OF THE TIME WE SPENT IN THOSE C-RANK DUNGEONS, BOSS.
CHEW
CHEW
SWALLOW BEFORE YOU TALK.
YOUR MINIONS CAN MOVE ON THEIR OWN, RIGHT?
SO WHY NOT LET YOUR MINIONS CONTINUE THE RAID WHILE WE EAT OR WHEN YOU'RE OTHERWISE PREOCCUPIED, BOSS?
NO, I CAN'T DO THAT.
THE FARTHER AWAY THEY ARE FROM ME, THE LESS EXPERIENCE I GET.
WHO KNOWS WHAT THEY'LL GET UP TO IF I'M NOT AROUND?
CHOMP
CHOMP
AHHH!!

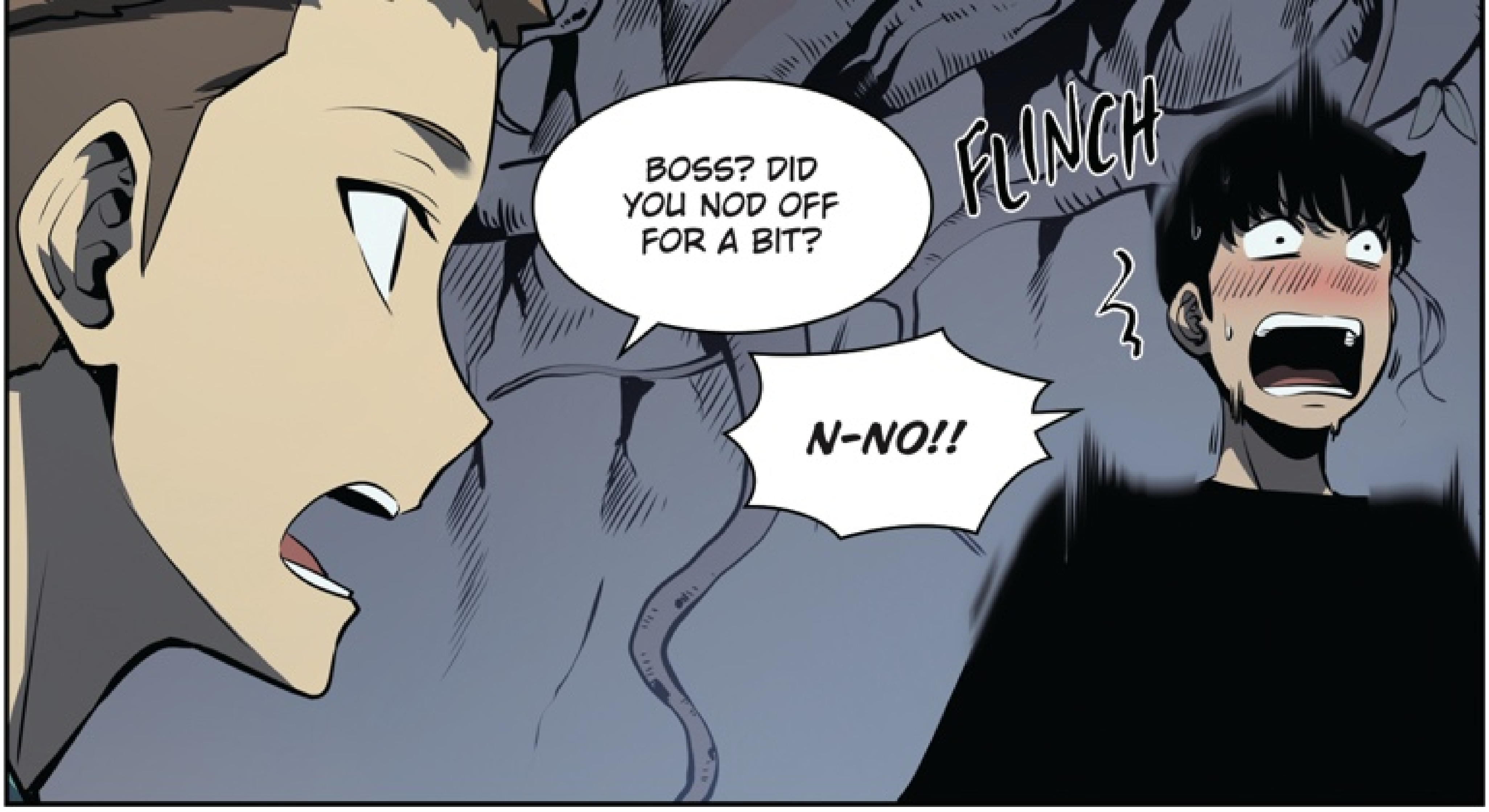
HEY, HOW'S YOUR SISTER DOING?
SHE'S BEEN THROUGH HELL...
LOOKS LIKE SHE NEEDS TO REST AWHILE.
I'VE GOT SOMEONE RELIABLE TO WATCH HER, SO NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT HER SAFETY.
SPEAKING OF WHICH...
...SHOULD I CHECK ON HER?
SKILL
[Shadow Storage Lv.2]
Job-exclusive skill.
No mana required.
Shadow soldiers can be stored by absorbing them into the caster's shadow.
Stored shadow soldiers can be summoned or reabsorbed at any time.
Lv. 2 Buff: Sensory Sharing: A stored shadow soldier can share their senses with the host.
Number of shadows stored: 840/840

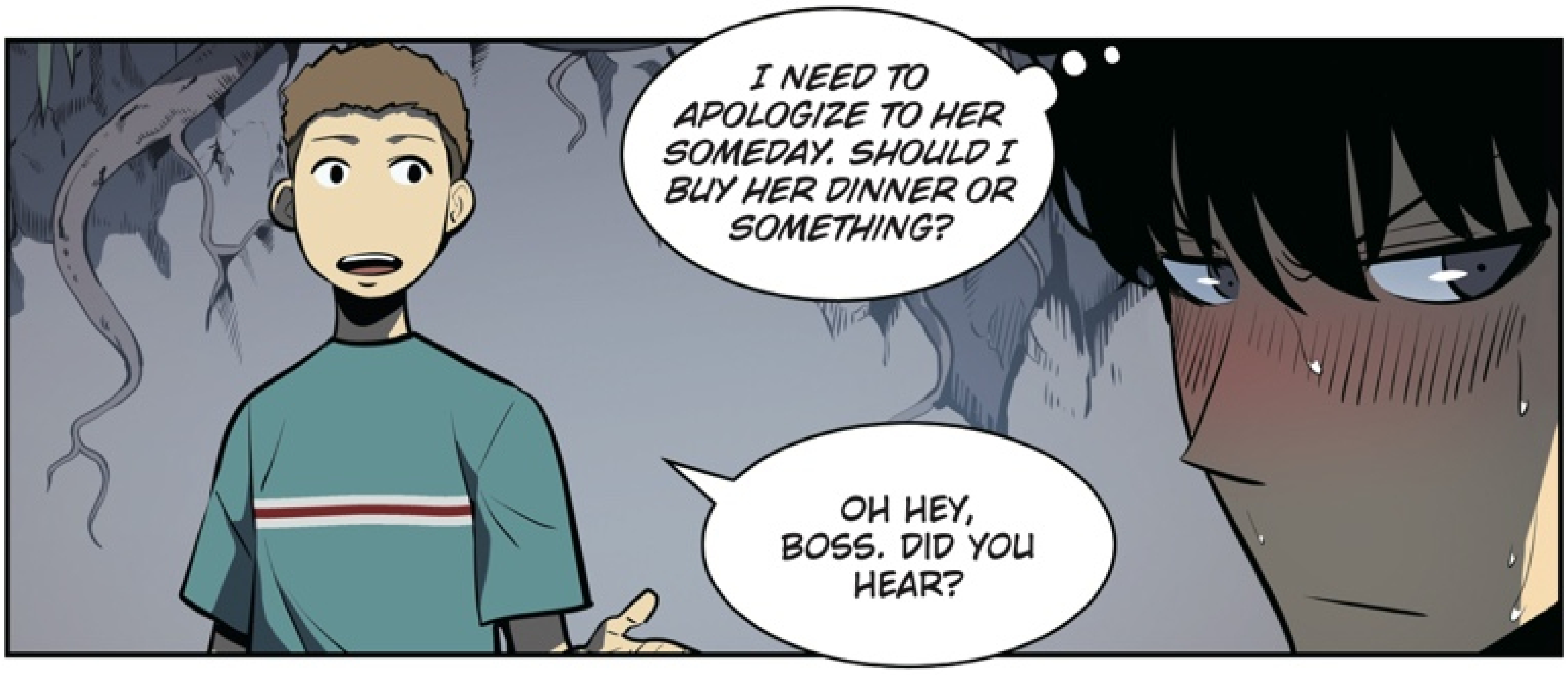
LEVEL 2 BUFF: SENSORY SHARING—
I CAN SEE WHAT A SHADOW SOLDIER SEES.
JINAH IS NOW...
FLASH


Your Highness!
You should be a wise and kind king. How could you do that?

My lord!!
Do not do that, Your Highness!
My lord!!
My lord!!
JINAH IS SLEEPING PEACEFULLY.
I SHOULD'VE GUESSED WHEN BERU STARTED TALKING ALL WEIRD.
HE'S INTO PERIOD DRAMAS?


AND THE OTHERS...?
......
DRIP
DRIP
PLIP


BOSS? DID YOU NOD OFF FOR A BIT?
FLINCH
N-NO!!

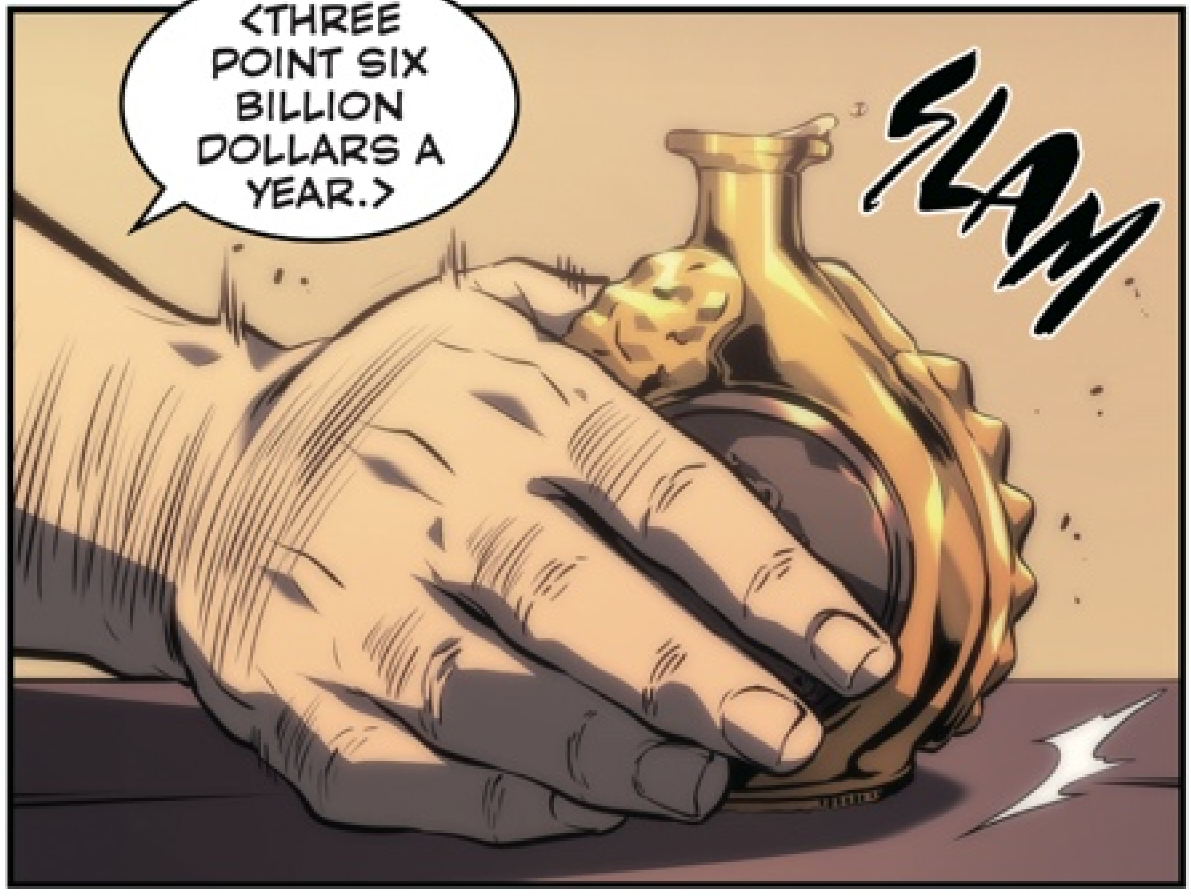

I NEED TO APOLOGIZE TO HER SOMEDAY. SHOULD I BUY HER DINNER OR SOMETHING?
OH HEY, BOSS. DID YOU HEAR?

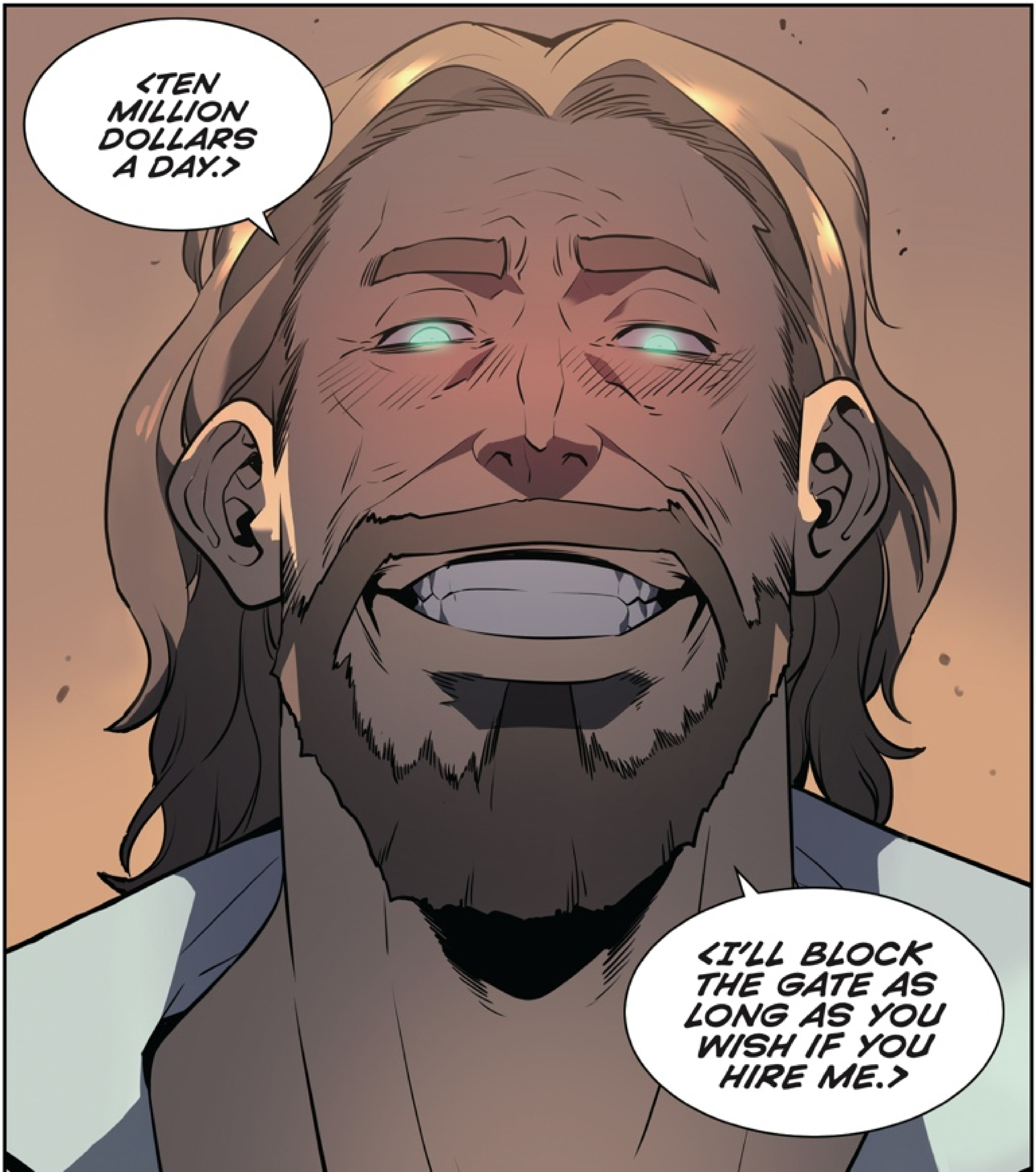
YOU KNOW THE S-RANK GATE IN SHINJUKU.
PEOPLE ARE EXPECTING THERE TO BE A DUNGEON BREAK IN THREE DAYS.
THEY'RE GATHERING HUNTERS FROM ALL OVER. HAVE THEY CONTACTED YOU YET?

TIME REALLY FLIES.
THEY HAVE, BUT I'M STILL DEBATING, SINCE I HAVE SOMETHING MORE URGENT TO TAKE CARE OF.
THE INVITATION FROM THE SYSTEM. WHAT KIND OF ANSWERS WILL I FIND THERE?
ITEM
[Name: Cartenon Temple's Key]
Acquisition Difficulty: ??
Category: Key
This key unlocks the entrance to the Cartenon Temple. You can use it at the designated gate. The location of the designated gate will be revealed after the allotted time passes.
Remaining time: 26:51:49
WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU?
ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU ANSWERED ME?
WHOOSH
OKAY, FINE. JUST ONE DAY LEFT.
I'LL FACE THE TRUTH SOON.
IF YOU'RE DONE EATING, GET UP. WE NEED TO GO BACK TO WORK.
YES, BOSS!

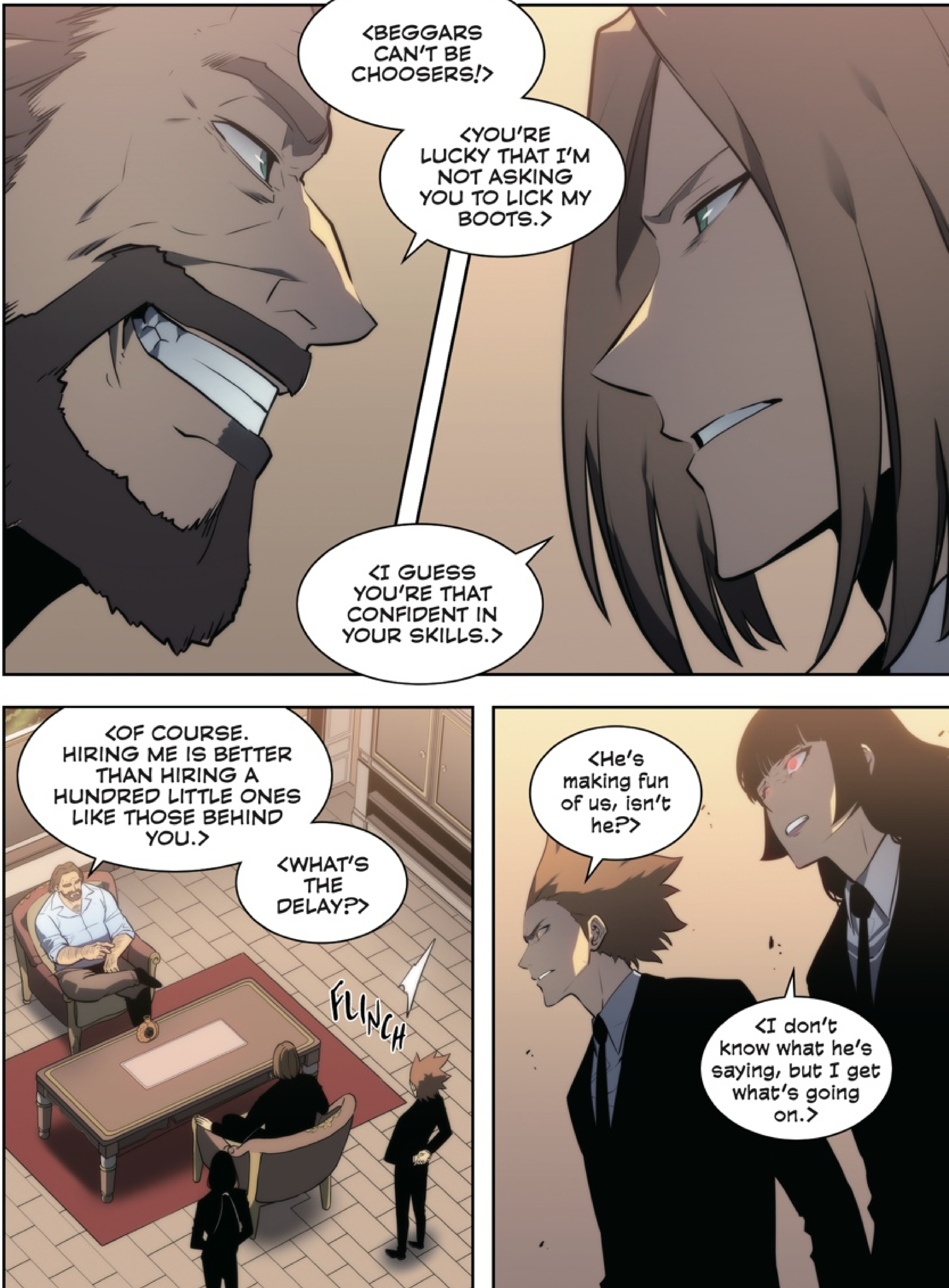
<YURI ORLOFF.>
<I'M SURE YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE THAT I'M THE BEST SUPPORT-TYPE HUNTER OUT THERE.>
YURI ORLOFF S-RANK HUNTER
<I'VE READ THE INFORMATION FROM THE DRAWN SWORD GUILD.>
GULP
<GOOD DECISION TO EVACUATE CIVILIANS.>
<BUT YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH PERSONNEL.>
<IS IT TRUE THERE ARE ONLY SIX S-RANK HUNTERS FROM JAPAN?>
<YES.>
<EACH GUILD HAS TO RETAIN ONE S-RANK HUNTER IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH A-RANK GATES APPEARING IN JAPAN.>
<OUR GUILD WILL SEND THREE S-RANKS BUT LEAVE ONE BEHIND.>

<NO, NO. TERRIBLE.>
<HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOUR COUNTRY LIKE THAT?>


<THREE POINT SIX BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR.>
SLAM

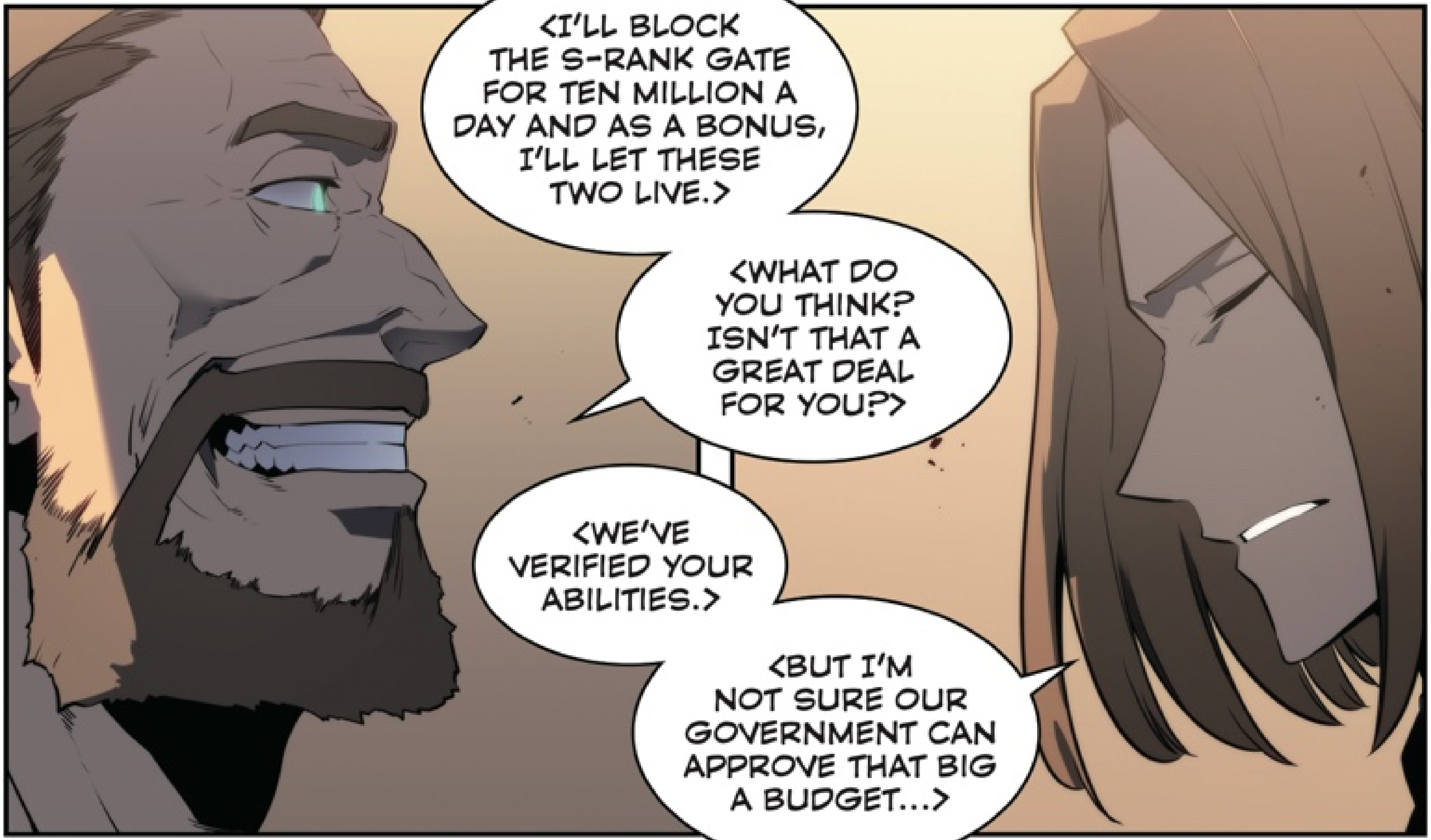

<TEN MILLION DOLLARS A DAY.>
<I'LL BLOCK THE GATE AS LONG AS YOU WISH IF YOU HIRE ME.>

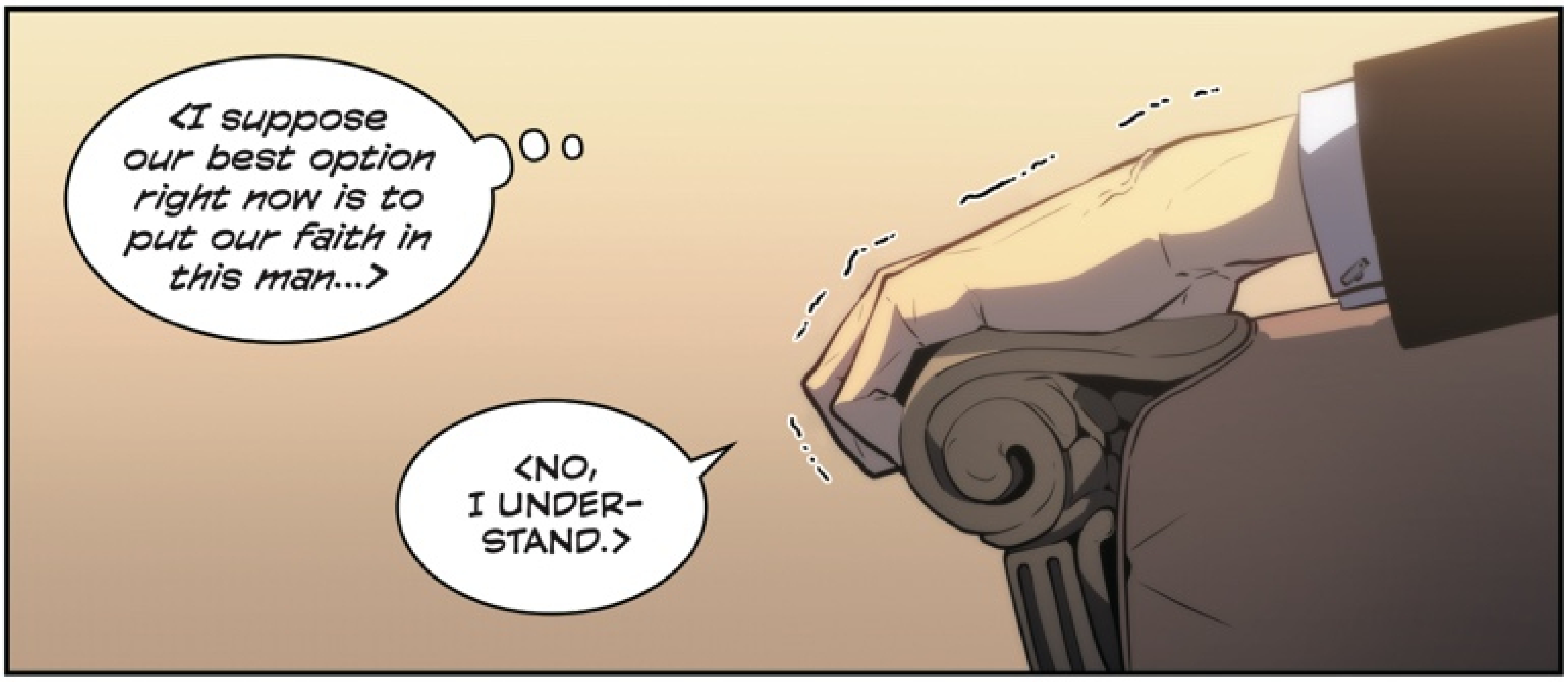
<TEN MILLION DOLLARS A DAY?!>
<3.6 BILLION A YEAR. THAT'S WHAT IT'LL TAKE TO SAVE YOUR COUNTRY.>
<IT'S NOT LIKE I'M ASKING FOR 36 BILLION A DAY, RIGHT? IT'S A BARGAIN COMPARED TO THOMAS.>
<Kanae, can you speak Russian?>
<What is this drunk saying?>
<I have no clue, but I'm sure it's nothing good.>
<WHAT DO YOU SAY? PAY TEN MILLION FOR YOUR COUNTRY OR GIVE UP ON YOUR NATION BECAUSE YOU THINK THAT'S TOO MUCH MONEY?>
<BWA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!>


<BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS!>
<YOU'RE LUCKY THAT I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO LICK MY BOOTS.>
<I GUESS YOU'RE THAT CONFIDENT IN YOUR SKILLS.>
<OF COURSE. HIRING ME IS BETTER THAN HIRING A HUNDRED LITTLE ONES LIKE THOSE BEHIND YOU.>
<WHAT'S THE DELAY?>
FLINCH
<He's making fun of us, isn't he?>
<I don't know what he's saying, but I get what's going on.>

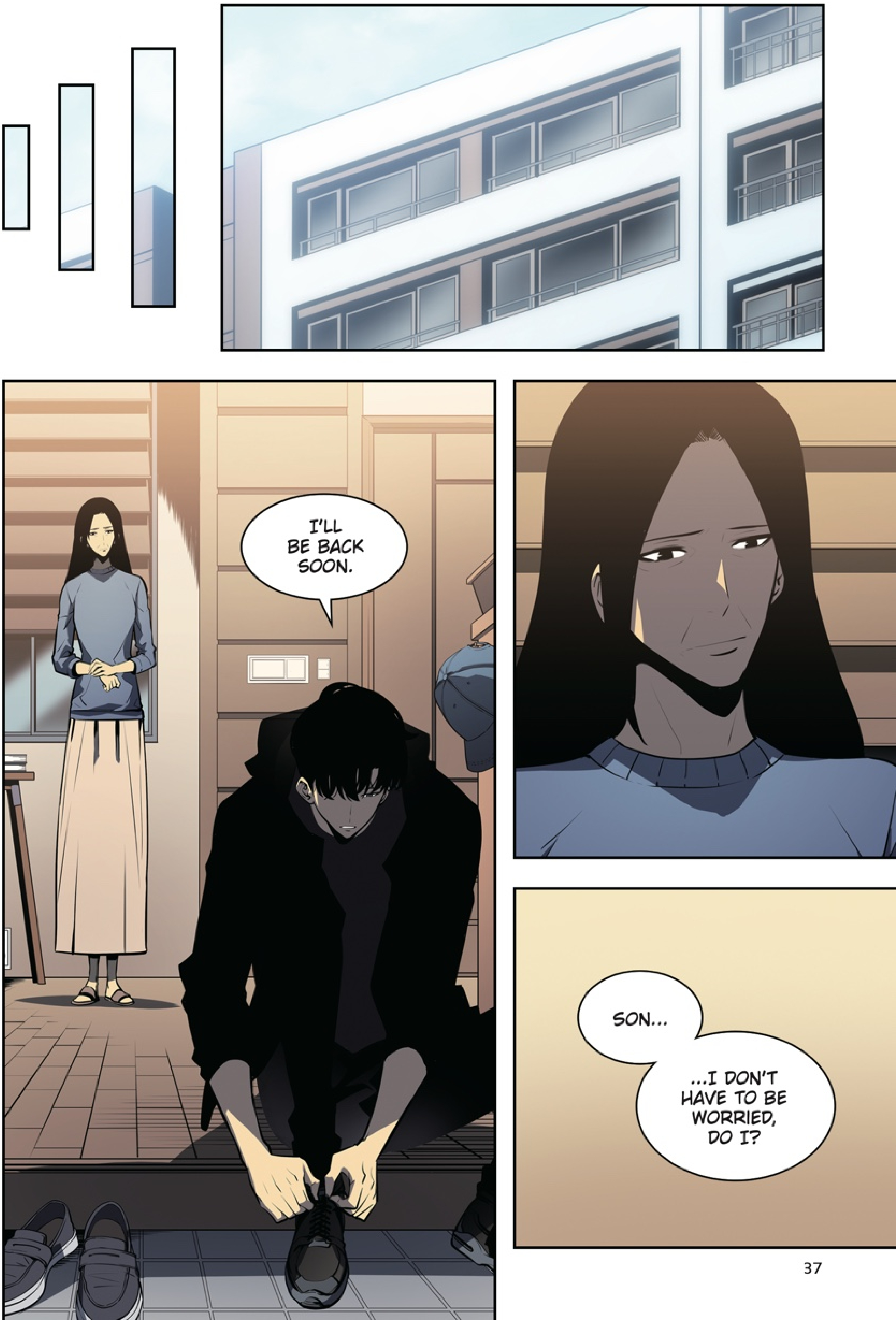
ZING
<YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO MOVE ONE STEP WITHOUT MY PERMISSION WHILE YOU'RE IN THERE.>

<COME OUT IF YOU CAN.>
<We're S-ranks! How is he immobilizing us...?!>
<Crap...! It feels like I'm tied up!>


<I'LL BLOCK THE S-RANK GATE FOR TEN MILLION A DAY AND AS A BONUS, I'LL LET THESE TWO LIVE.>
<WHAT DO YOU THINK? ISN'T THAT A GREAT DEAL FOR YOU?>
<WE'VE VERIFIED YOUR ABILITIES.>
<BUT I'M NOT SURE OUR GOVERNMENT CAN APPROVE THAT BIG A BUDGET...>

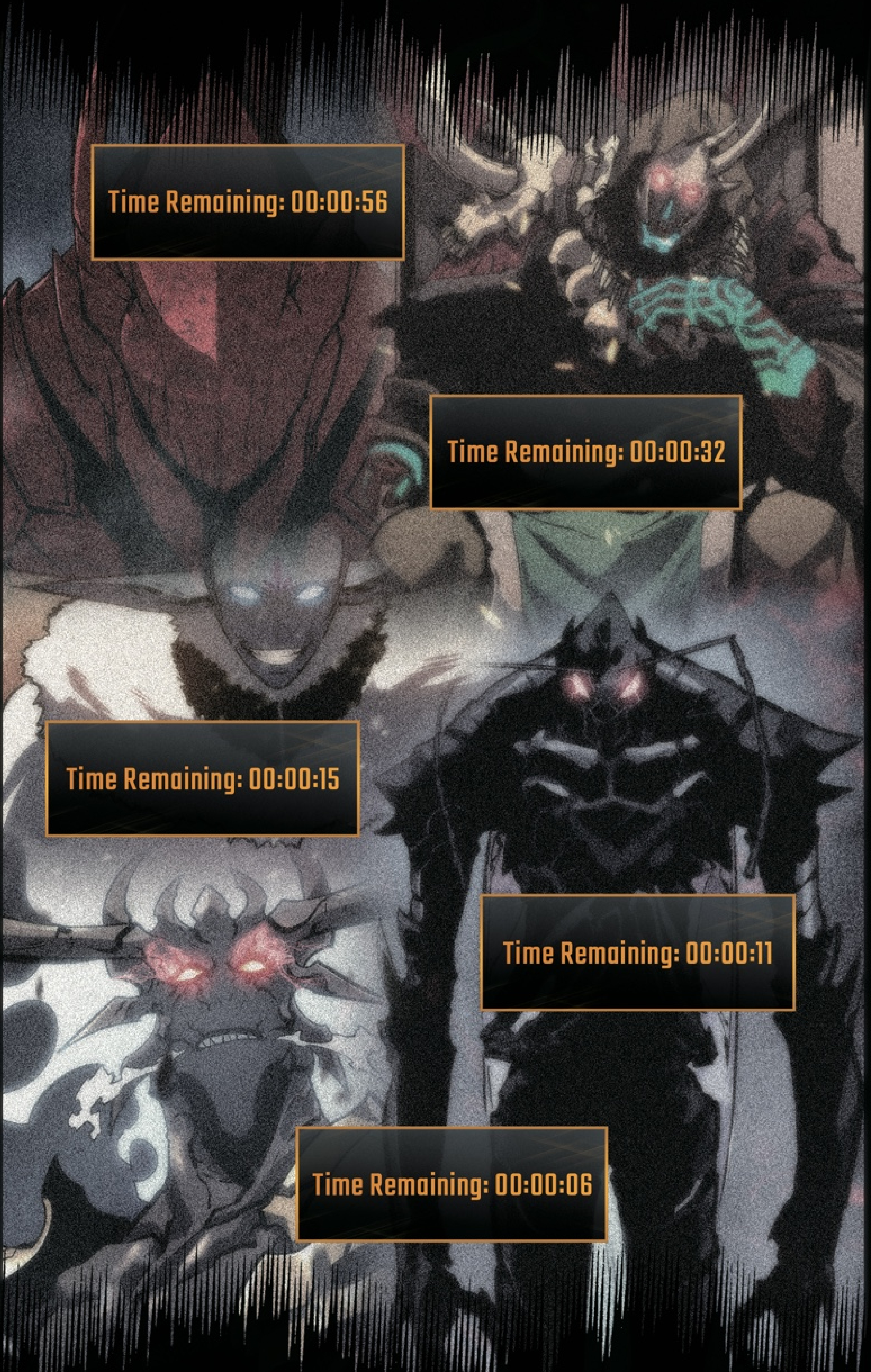

<I suppose our best option right now is to put our faith in this man...>
<NO, I UNDER-STAND.>

<MAY I MAKE A QUICK CALL?>
<OF COURSE.>


I'LL BE BACK SOON.
SON...
...I DON'T HAVE TO BE WORRIED, DO I?

NO. I'VE MADE PLANS WITH SOMEONE.
I'M OFF.
KA-CHAK

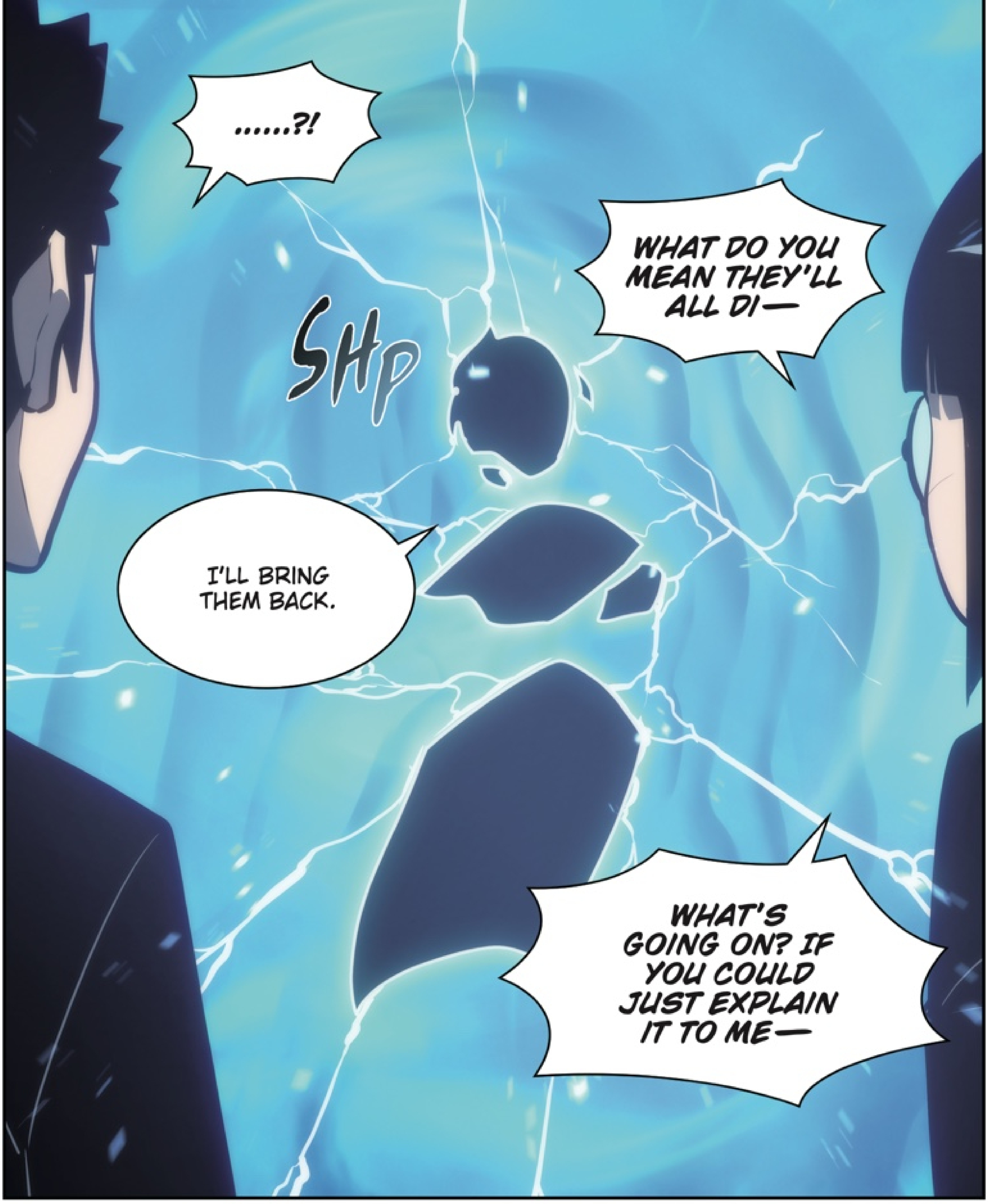
ITEM
[Item: Cartenon Temple's Key]
Acquisition Difficulty: ??
Category: Key
This key unlocks the entrance to the Cartenon Temple. You can use it at the designated gate.
The location of the designated gate will be revealed after the allotted time passes.
Remaining time: 00:01:02


Time Remaining: 00:00:56
Time Remaining: 00:00:32
Time Remaining: 00:00:15
Time Remaining: 00:00:11
Time Remaining: 00:00:06

FLASH!
The location of the designated gate is revealed.

I CAN'T BELIEVE ANOTHER GATE HAS SPAWNED IN THE SAME PLACE.
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS
IT'S A GOOD THING THAT SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN CLOSED A WHILE. THIS PLACE WOULD BE OUT OF CONTROL IF IT WERE BUSY WITH STUDENTS.
YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED IN THIS AREA.
FWIP
H-HUNTER JINWOO SUNG?

HOW LONG HAS THIS GATE BEEN AROUND?
T-TODAY IS THE THIRD DAY.
I'VE BEEN TRICKED!
IT SAID THE LOCATION OF THE GATE WOULD BE REVEALED, BUT IT DIDN'T SAY THE GATE WOULD SPAWN RIGHT THEN.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE THIS GATE APPEARED.
IS IT A C-RANK GATE?
IT'S NOT A HIGH-RANK ONE, BUT...
HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN IN THERE?
IT'S BEEN ABOUT TWO HOURS.
YOU NEED TO STOP THE RAID RIGHT NOW.
PARDON? BUT ACCORDING TO THE MEASUREMENT, IT'S ONLY A C-RANK GATE—
THE STRIKE SQUAD IS IN DANGER.
IF THEY DON'T STOP, THEY'LL ALL DIE.


......?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN THEY'LL ALL DI—
SHP
I'LL BRING THEM BACK.
WHAT'S GOING ON? IF YOU COULD JUST EXPLAIN IT TO ME—

THERE'S NO TIME FOR THAT.

IS THIS THE BOSS'S LAIR? WHY ISN'T THE DOOR OPENING?
WHAT SHOULD WE DO? OUR MAGIC SPELLS ARE NOT EVEN MAKING A DENT.
WE CAN'T JUST TURN AROUND AT THIS POINT...
IT'S A TRAP.
SON OF A—!!

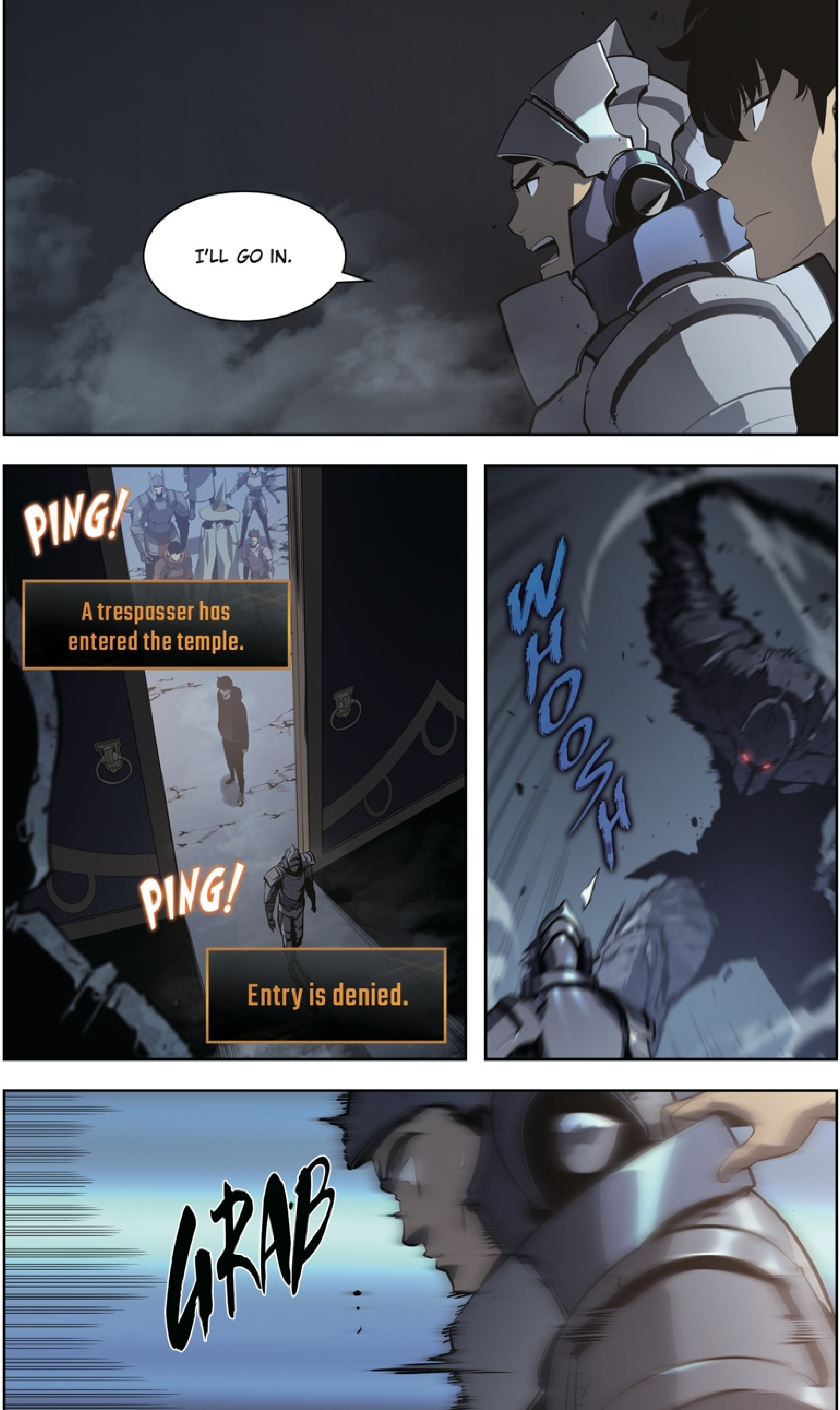
WH- WHO ARE YOU?!
I'M A SURVIVOR OF THE DOUBLE DUNGEON.

SURVIVOR OF THE DOUBLE DUNGEON?
HUH?
ISN'T THAT HUNTER JINWOO SUNG?

IT'S REALLY HIM, ISN'T IT? IT'S JINWOO SUNG, THE S-RANK HUNTER!
THIS IS A HORRIFICALLY DANGEROUS PLACE.
YOU SHOULD TURN BACK. I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.

I CAN'T OPEN IT. IS THERE A MAGIC SPELL ON IT?
MURMUR
MURMUR
KLAK
The door to the Cartenon Temple is locked.
Please open with the key.
IT'S DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE.
THIS IS WHY I NEED THIS KEY.
WHOOM
HUH, WHAT THE...?
CREAK
HOW DID HE OPEN IT?
IT WOULDN'T MOVE AT ALL BEFORE, RIGHT?

EXCUSE ME, HUNTER SUNG. THE BRAVERY GUILD ACQUIRED THE PERMIT TO RAID THIS DUNGEON FAIR AND SQUARE.
YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO TELL US TO LEAVE.
YEAH! YOU THINK YOU CAN DO WHATEVER JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE AN S-RANK?
......
I WON'T STOP YOU.
FEEL FREE TO ENTER IF YOU LIKE.


I'LL GO IN.
PING!
A trespasser has entered the temple.
PING!
Entry is denied.
WHOOSH
GRAB

KLUNG
BOOM
THE ENTIRE ROOM IS LIKE THAT.
FSHHH
STILL WANT TO GO INSIDE?
PLEASE.
GET OUT OF HERE NOW AND CONTACT THE ASSOCIATION.

TELL THEM A DOUBLE DUNGEON HAS APPEARED.
The keeper of the key has entered.

THUD

FWOOSH

WHIIISH

IT ALL STARTED HERE.
I'M...
...BACK.

IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THAT TIME.
AND I CAN CLEARLY SEE ONE THING.

THEY'RE NOT MAGIC BEASTS OR LIVING BEINGS.
THEY'RE MERE PUPPETS CONNECTED TO SOMETHING ELSE.
TMP
TMP
ONLY ONE BEING IN THIS ROOM POSSESSES MAGIC POWER—

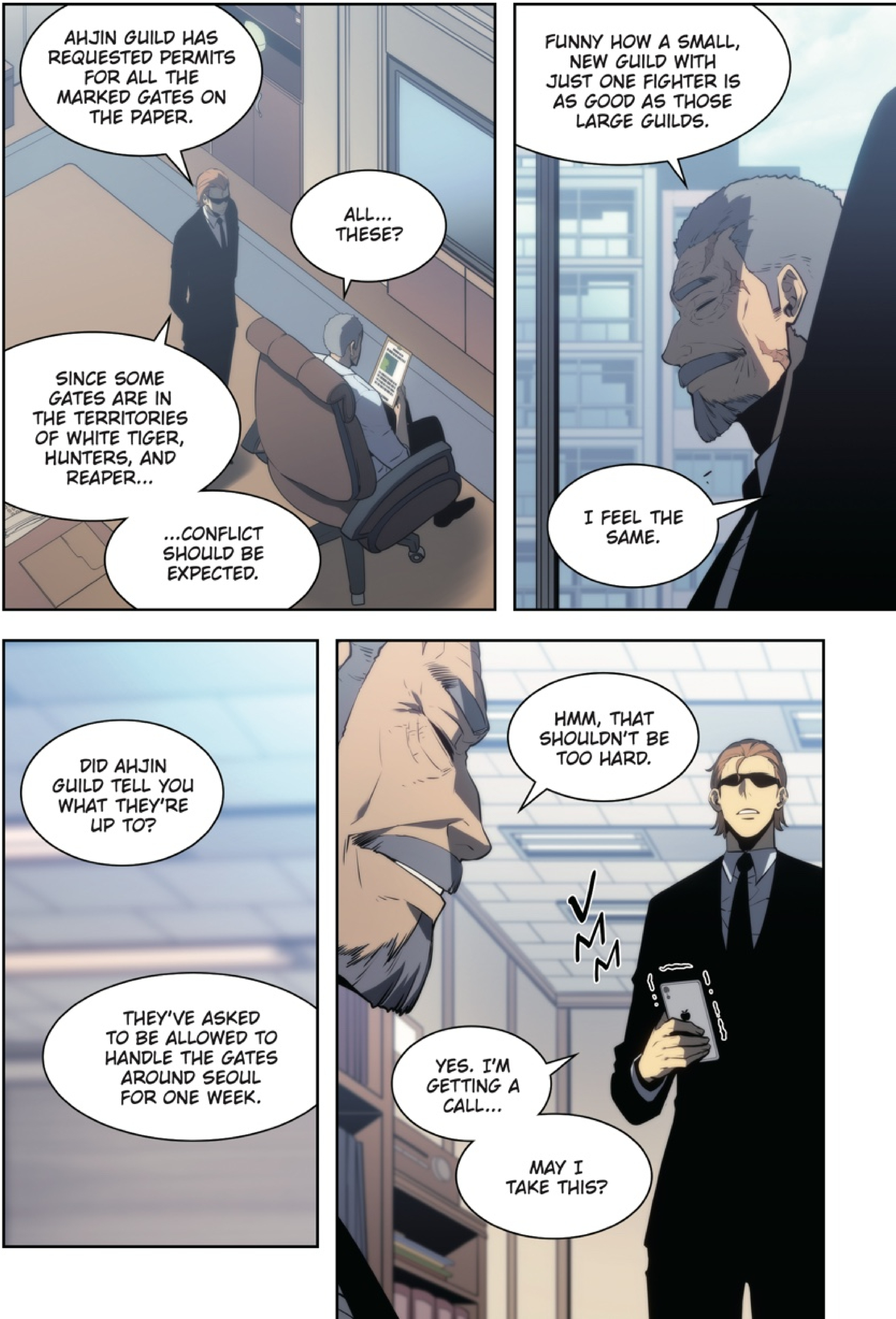
SO IT WAS YOU.
WON'T OPEN YOUR MOUTH?
WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER ME ALREADY?
WHIIISH
TMP

AT LAST, YOU'VE MADE IT.
CREAK

KA SHAK
<It's Yuri Orloff!>
KA SHAK
<Please look over here!>
KA SHAK
<Mr. Orloff, how are you planning to block the gate?>
<My usual way.>
<I'm going to put a huge magic circle, like this, around the gate!>
<And once I put my mana into it, that'll be it.>
TWIRL
<Whatever's inside won't be able to escape.>

<Are you saying you'll be able to block the S-rank gate by yourself?>
SMIRK
<Our people have little faith. What do you say about that?>
<If I were maintaining it solely with my mana, then it would be an impossible feat.>
<However, my ability is that my magic circles are powered up by absorbing the magic around them.>
<When large quantities of mana stones are spread all over Tokyo, the circle will absorb the magic power.>
<It's like starting a car engine.>
<Once the circle is activated, it's fueled by the mana around it, and the magic circle becomes like a huge and sturdy castle wall.>
<I will save you!>
<Just remember who's rescuing you from doom!>

HMM...
I'M NOT SURE WHETHER YURI ORLOFF CAN BLOCK THE GATE.
BUT I KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF HE FAILS.
Contract with Yuri Orlov
HOW'S HUNTER SUNG DOING NOWADAYS?
HE'S TOURING GATES IN SEOUL.


AHJIN GUILD HAS REQUESTED PERMITS FOR ALL THE MARKED GATES ON THE PAPER.
ALL... THESE?
SINCE SOME GATES ARE IN THE TERRITORIES OF WHITE TIGER, HUNTERS, AND REAPER...
...CONFLICT SHOULD BE EXPECTED.
FUNNY HOW A SMALL, NEW GUILD WITH JUST ONE FIGHTER IS AS GOOD AS THOSE LARGE GUILDS.
I FEEL THE SAME.
DID AHJIN GUILD TELL YOU WHAT THEY'RE UP TO?
THEY'VE ASKED TO BE ALLOWED TO HANDLE THE GATES AROUND SEOUL FOR ONE WEEK.
HMM, THAT SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD.
VMM
YES. I'M GETTING A CALL...
MAY I TAKE THIS?

GO AHEAD.
I HAVE TO LEAVE SINCE I HAVE PLANS.
BOW
YES, SIR.
SHUT
THIS IS MANAGER JINCHUL WOO.
Manager Woo, we have a report that may require your attention.
You know the school that was attacked by orcs?
DID SOMETHING ELSE HAPPEN...?
Not yet, but the report indicates that...
...a double dungeon was discovered on campus.
A DOUBLE DUNGEON?

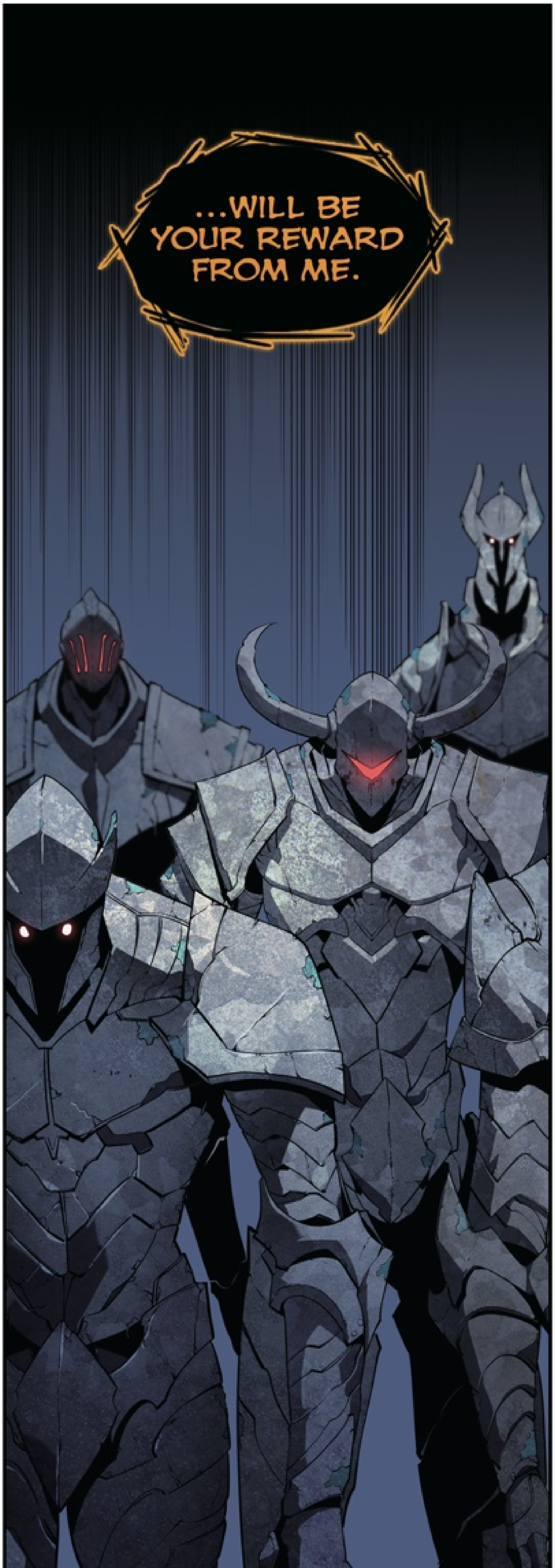
Not only that...
THERE'S MORE?
KRI-KRIK
KRI-KRI-KRIK
I was told that Hunter Jinwoo Sung has entered the gate.
KRI-KRI-KRIK

CRACK
AT LAST, YOU'VE MADE IT.
CRASH
IS IT OKAY... TO TREAT THE SLATE SO CARELESSLY?
FWIP
THE COMMANDMENTS ON THE STONE SLATE WERE MEANINGLESS FROM THE START.
CRUMBLE
THERE WAS MEANING.
BUT IT'S NOT IMPORTANT ANYMORE.

ARE YOU THE ONE WHO CALLED ME HERE?
YES.
ARE YOU A MAGIC BEAST?
YOU'RE ASKING THE WRONG QUESTION.

YOU SHOULD'VE ASKED ME...
...WHO *YOU* ARE RATHER THAN WHO *I* AM.
CLAP
NOW, THIS WILL BE THE FINAL TEST.

IF YOU'RE STILL STANDING WHEN THIS TEST IS OVER, I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING.
CREAK
CREAK
THAT...


...WILL BE YOUR REWARD FROM ME.

COME OUT.
VWOOOM

YOU CANNOT DO THAT.
SNAP
THIS IS A PLACE FOR A TEST.

Job-exclusive skills may not be used during the final test.

YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE I WISH TO TEST.
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR SUBJECTS' ABILITIES.
WHAT?
The use of potions and the shop are forbidden. Condition recovery rewards gained through leveling up and quest completion have been disabled.

SO THAT'S HOW IT'S GONNA BE, HUH?
You may not leave until the final test has ended.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THE SECRET CARDS I'VE BEEN PREPARING HAVE BEEN RENDERED USELESS IN ONE FELL SWOOP.
SHWP
I CAN STILL USE THE INVENTORY!
FINE, I'LL PASS THIS TEST UNDER MY OWN POWER.
WHOOSH

GRAB
HWIP
KRAK
FWOOMH
SLAM

CREAK
WHAM
FWOOSH
SHD

SHUNK
FWIP
WHAM

SHWP
THWACK
KLANG

LEAP
BAM
POW
YES, THIS IS THE MOMENT I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR.
SWOOSH

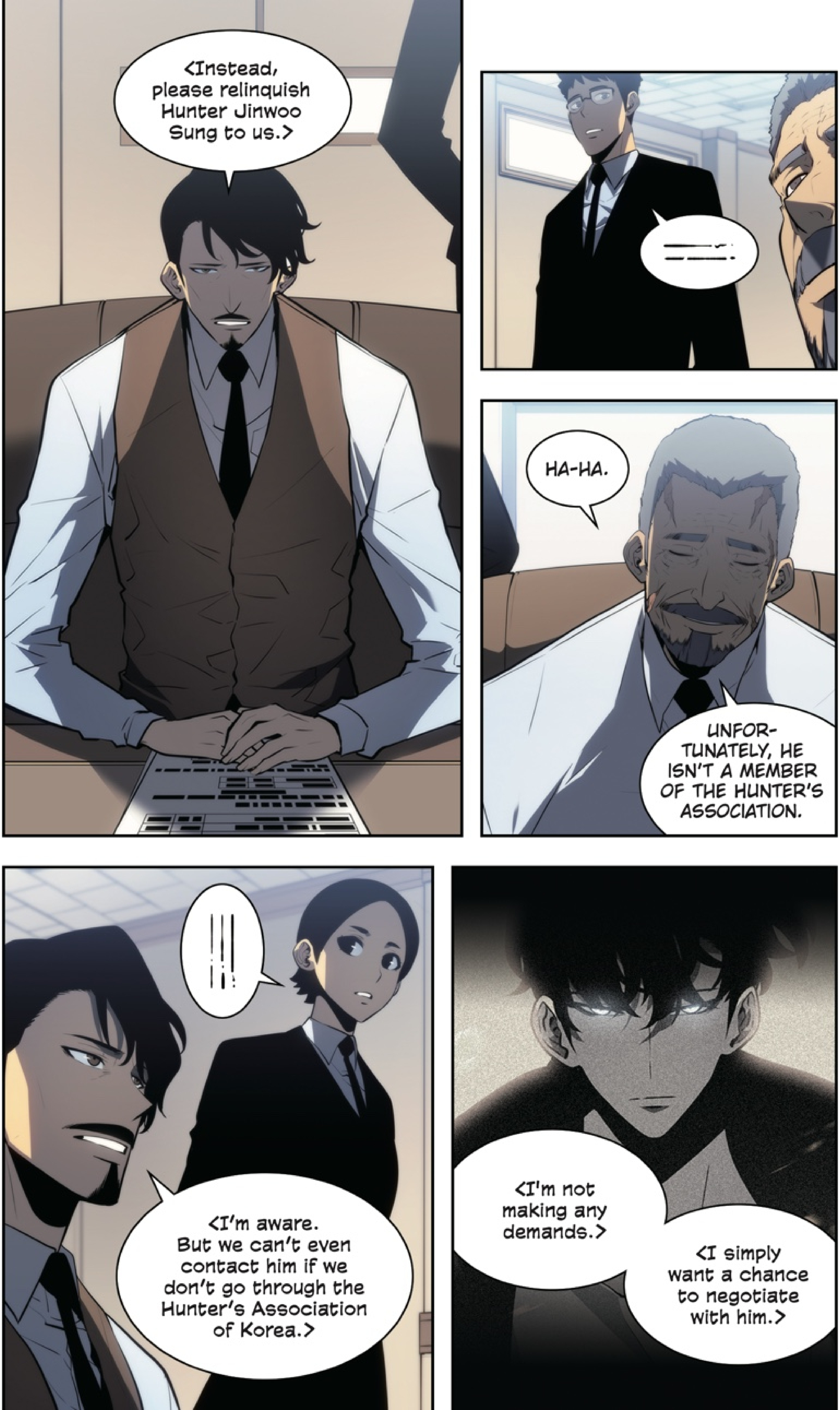
KRA-KRAK
IT WAS ALL FOR THIS MOMENT...
HE'S MOVING WELL FOR A HUMAN...
INDEED...
...HE HAS CERTAINLY GROWN.

THE STATUES' MOVEMENTS WERE LIKE TELEPORTATION BEFORE. BUT I CAN SEE THEM.
CLANG
EACH ONE IS STRONG, BUT I CAN DO THIS!
WHAT AMAZING GROWTH.
HOWEVER, IT'S TOO EARLY TO END THE TEST.
RUMBLE

CLATTER
RUMBLE
BOOOM

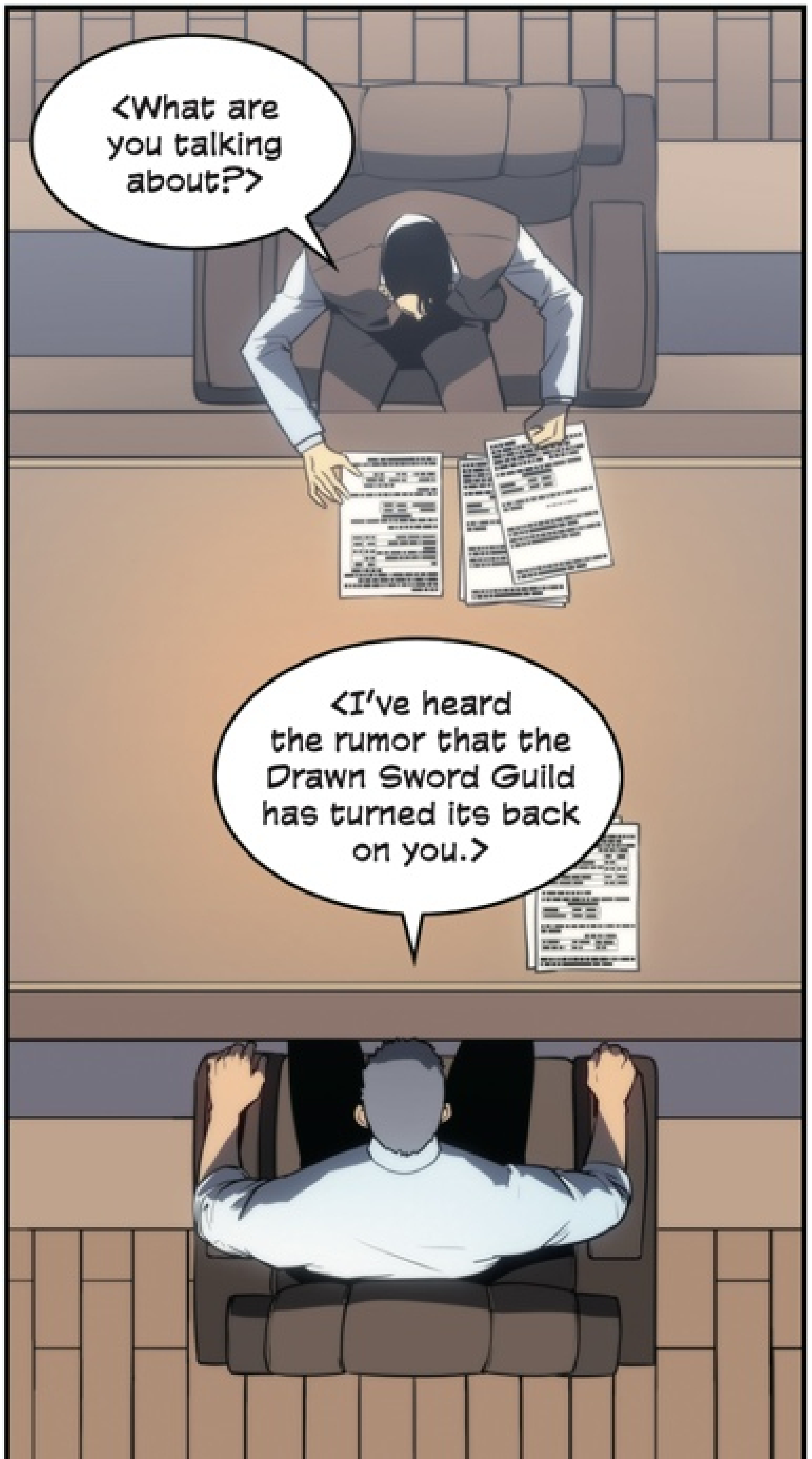
NOW, IT'S TIME TO WORSHIP THE GOD.

<This is a memorandum stating that Japan surrenders its rights to the essence stones on Jeju Island.>
TAP
......?
WHY?


<Instead, please relinquish Hunter Jinwoo Sung to us.>
HA-HA.
UNFOR-TUNATELY, HE ISN'T A MEMBER OF THE HUNTER'S ASSOCIATION.
!!
<I'm aware. But we can't even contact him if we don't go through the Hunter's Association of Korea.>
<I'm not making any demands.>
<I simply want a chance to negotiate with him.>

I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S GOING TO GIVE UP AN ASTRO-NOMICAL AMOUNT OF MONEY FOR THIS SINGLE CHANCE!
DOES THIS MEAN THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO TACKLE AN S-RANK GATE AFTER LOSING RYUJI GOTO?
IT ISN'T A BAD DEAL IF I CONSIDER HOW HIGH HUNTER SUNG'S FEE WOULD BE, BUT...
HMM...
<I would like to speak to you without the interpreters.>
TAP
<You... can speak Japanese?>
<When I was young, my father owned a small business in Japan.>

<President Matsumoto.>
<If you're planning another trick, you'd better quit now.>


<What are you talking about?>
<I've heard the rumor that the Drawn Sword Guild has turned its back on you.>

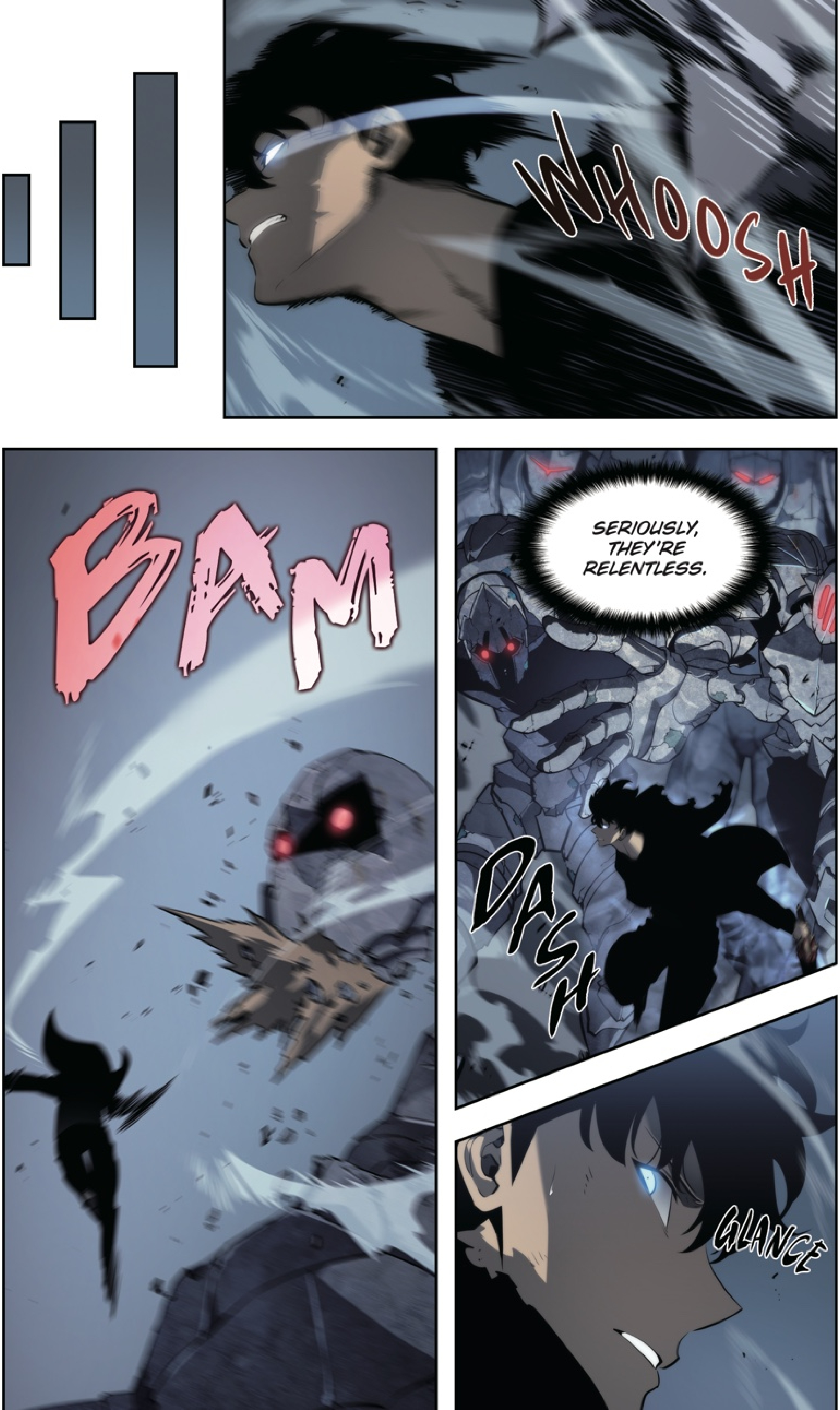
<How did you know that...?!!>
BOLT
<Given that the Drawn Sword Guild refused the subsidy from the Hunter's Association of Japan...>
<...and has only accepted the Japanese government's support, it was easy to guess.>

<The Drawn Sword Guild was the arm of the Hunter's Association of Japan.>
<You were able to make S-rank hunters work together because of Ryuji Goto. But it will likely be hard to do that now.>
<Other guilds are too busy making power moves since the Drawn Sword Guild has been destroyed and the Association has no control over them.>
<Isn't that right?>
<If you fail to defeat the S-rank gate this time...>
<...it's all on you, isn't it?>
<Even if he had ill intentions on Jeju Island, Goto was a hunter who represented his nation.>
SHFF

<You are responsible for taking Ryuji Goto from the Drawn Sword Guild.>
<You are responsible for dividing the guilds in your country instead of taking control of them.>
<And...for the huge losses sustained in your willful deception of your allies.>
<What is that...?>
<This is the black box from a communication device. >
<I'm told it was used by Hunter Goto's team.>
<Did you *think...*>

<...I didn't know about any of it?>
<This is not the time to discuss the essence stones.>
<If I made this public, the Japanese people would be burdened by your little trick.>
CRUSH

BAM
<But I'm not so heartless I'd do such a thing.>
<I can't let a country, no, all of Asia fall into panic...>
<...because of a single person's trickery.>
<You should thank Hunter Jinwoo Sung.>


WHOOSH
BAM
SERIOUSLY, THEY'RE RELENTLESS.
DASH
GLANCE

THERE'S NO TURNING BACK.
ZZZZT
IN THAT CASE...
SHHP
RULER'S HAND!
WHIIISH
ZAAAP

SLAM
BOOM
BOOM
BANG
PING!
[Skill: Ruler's Hand] has been upgraded to its ultimate version, [Skill: Ruler's Authority].
TMP

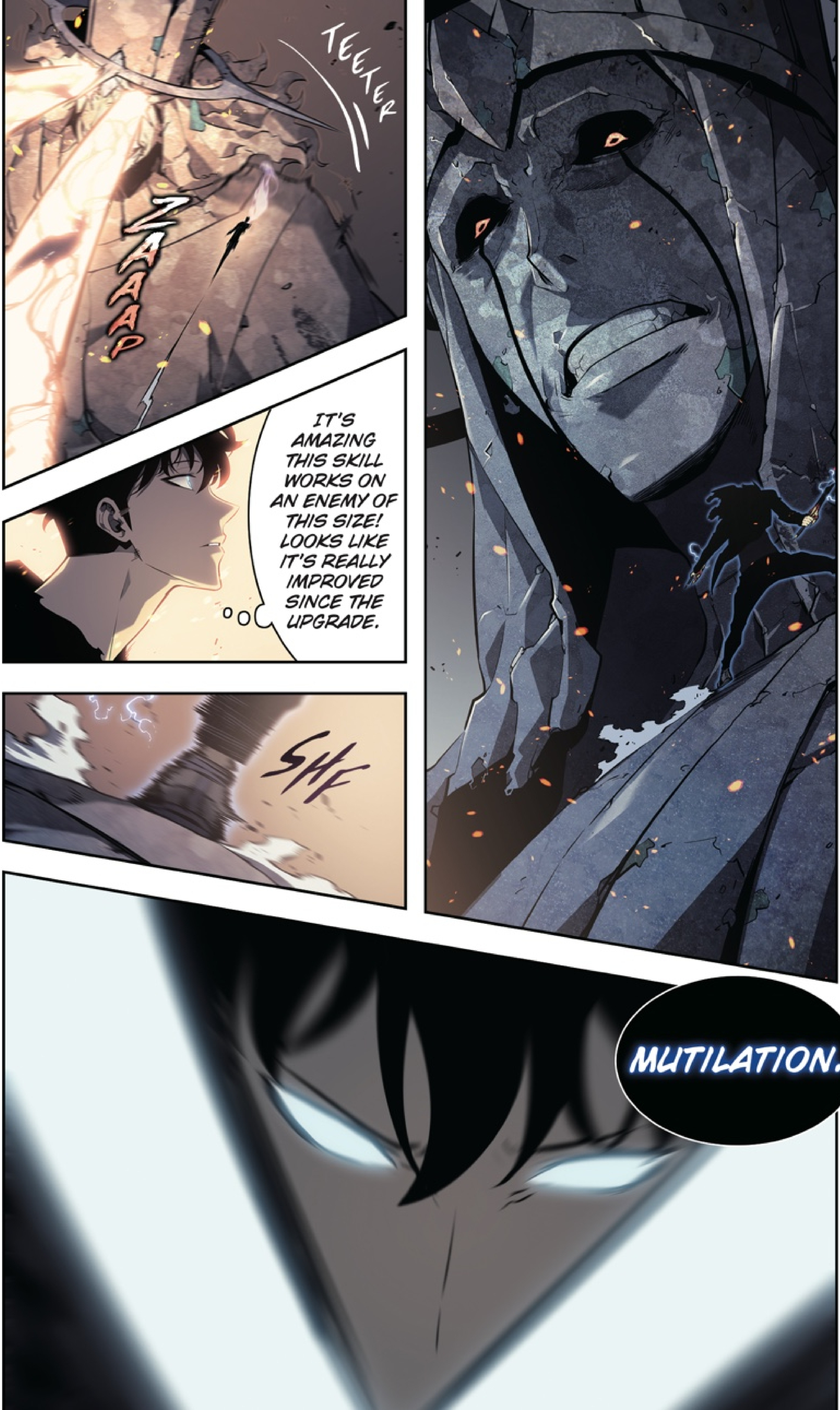
KA
BOOM
TMP
THAT WAS CLOSE. A DIRECT HIT WOULD'VE KILLED ME.

I KNEW I SHOULD'VE TAKEN IT DOWN FIRST!
CRACK
FLASH.
LEAP

WOOM
HWIP
BAM

FSHHH
CREAK
SHOOM

RAZOR AGAIN?
WITH A SPEED BOOST FROM FLASH USING THE POWER OF RULER'S AUTHORITY...
HWIP
...I CAN GET TO HIS BLIND SPOT.
RULER'S AUTHORITY!
FWISH
HWIP


TEETER
ZZAAAAP
IT'S AMAZING THIS SKILL WORKS ON AN ENEMY OF THIS SIZE! LOOKS LIKE IT'S REALLY IMPROVED SINCE THE UPGRADE.
SHF
MUTILATION.

SH-
SH-
SH-SHNK

THE DEMON MONARCH'S DAGGER CAN CUT THROUGH PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING, BUT IT ONLY SCRATCHED HIM.
SMIRK
IF I CAN'T PIERCE IT, THEN I NEED TO CRUSH IT!
LEAP
I SHOULD TARGET THOSE CRACKS!
GRAB

CLENCH
VMM
BREAK ALREADY!
WHAM

I CAN'T BELIEVE HE TOOK ON MY MOST AMBITIOUS WORK.

BAM

BAM
WHAM

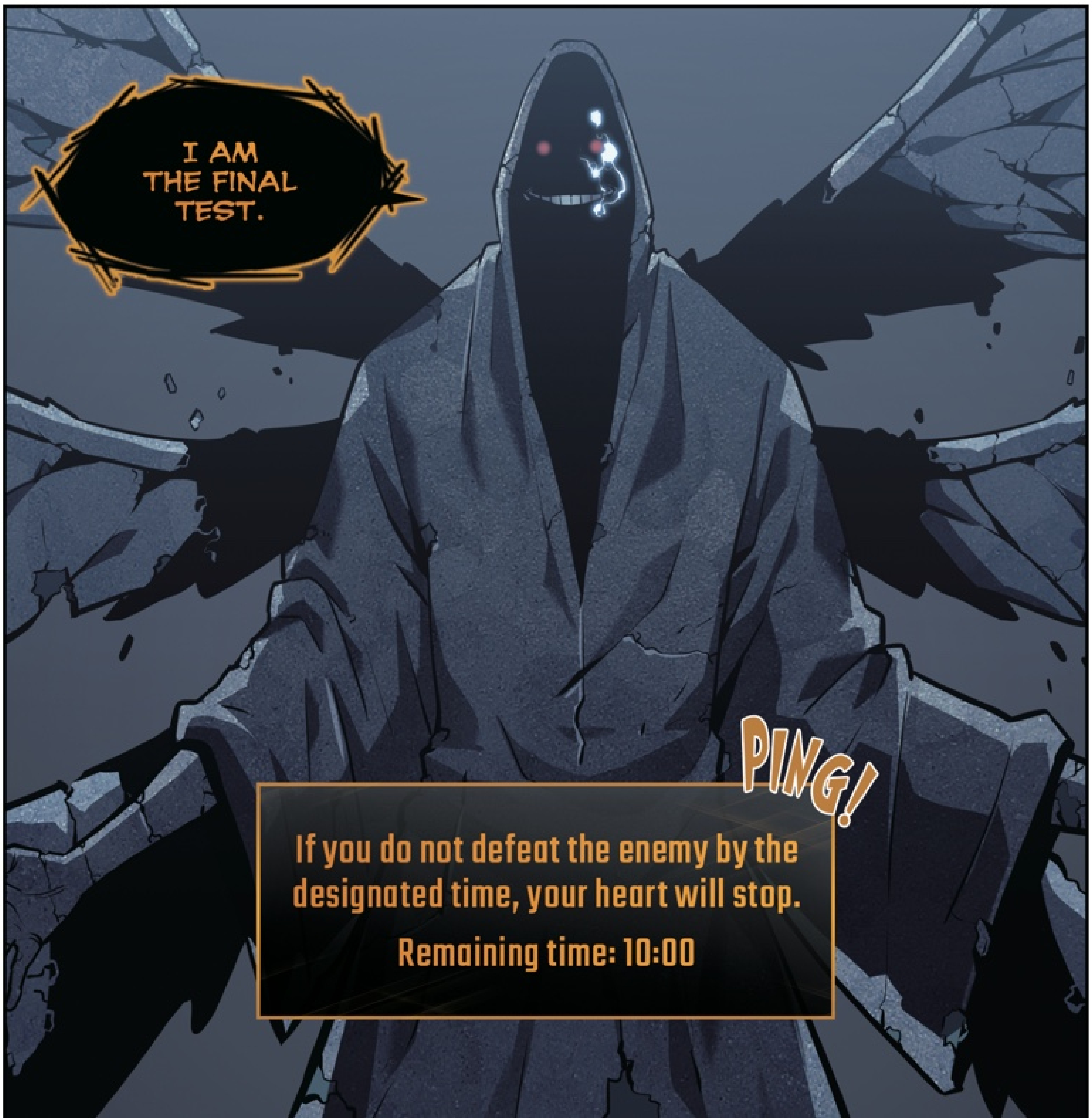
I'LL SHOW YOU THE POWER OF LEVEL 103!
WHAM
BAM
CREAK
THUD

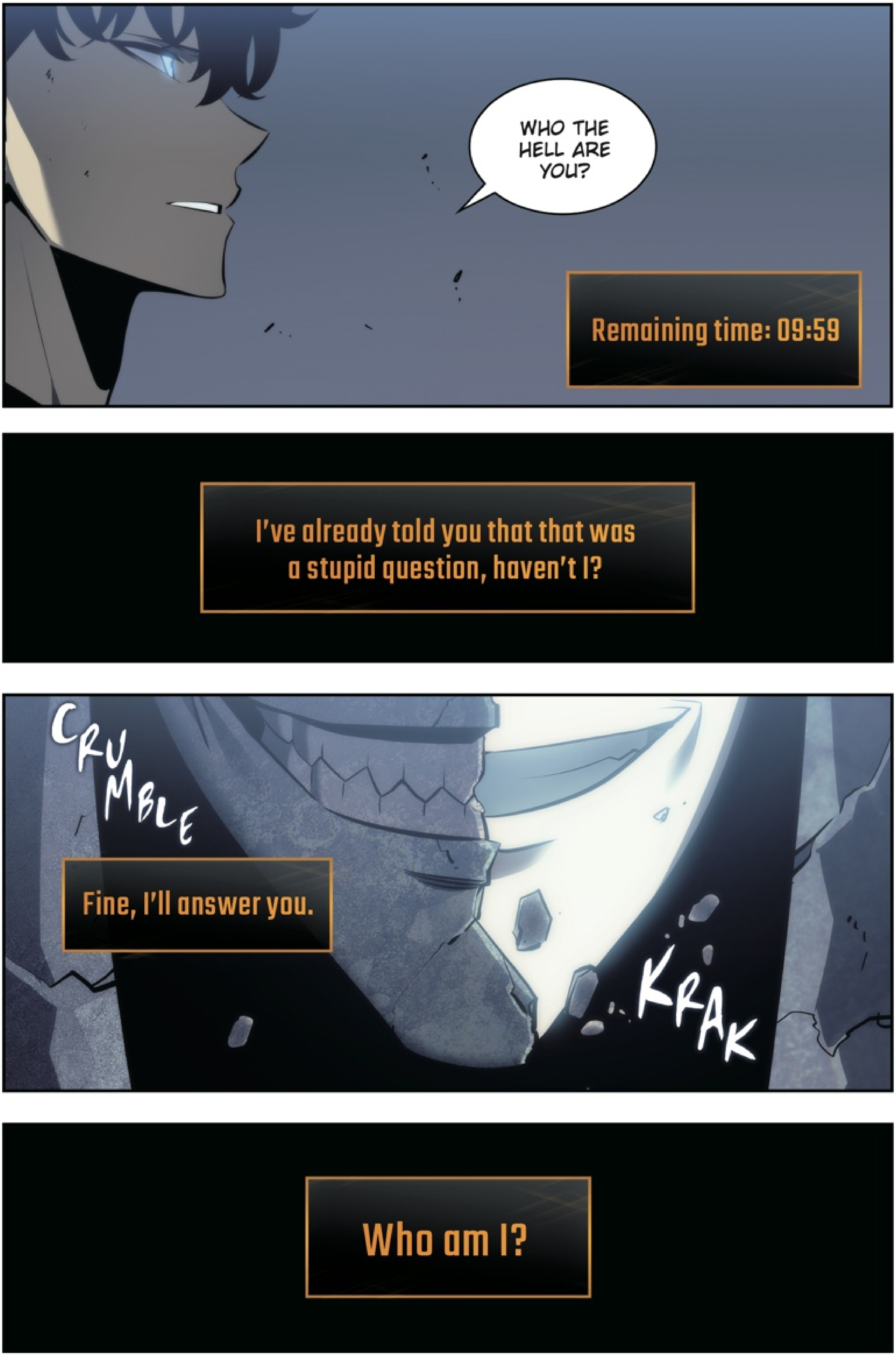
TMP
[Skill: Ruler's Authority]
has been activated.
WHOOOSH
RUMBLE

WHIIISH
FSHHH
EXTRAOR-DINARY.
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
I'VE BECOME STRONGER FROM THIS FIGHT.
CLAP
KEEP YOUR PROMISE.

KRIK
KRIIIK
HA-HA.
YOUR TEST ISN'T OVER YET.

AFTER ALL...
...I'M STILL HERE, AREN'T I?
PING!
An urgent quest has arrived.

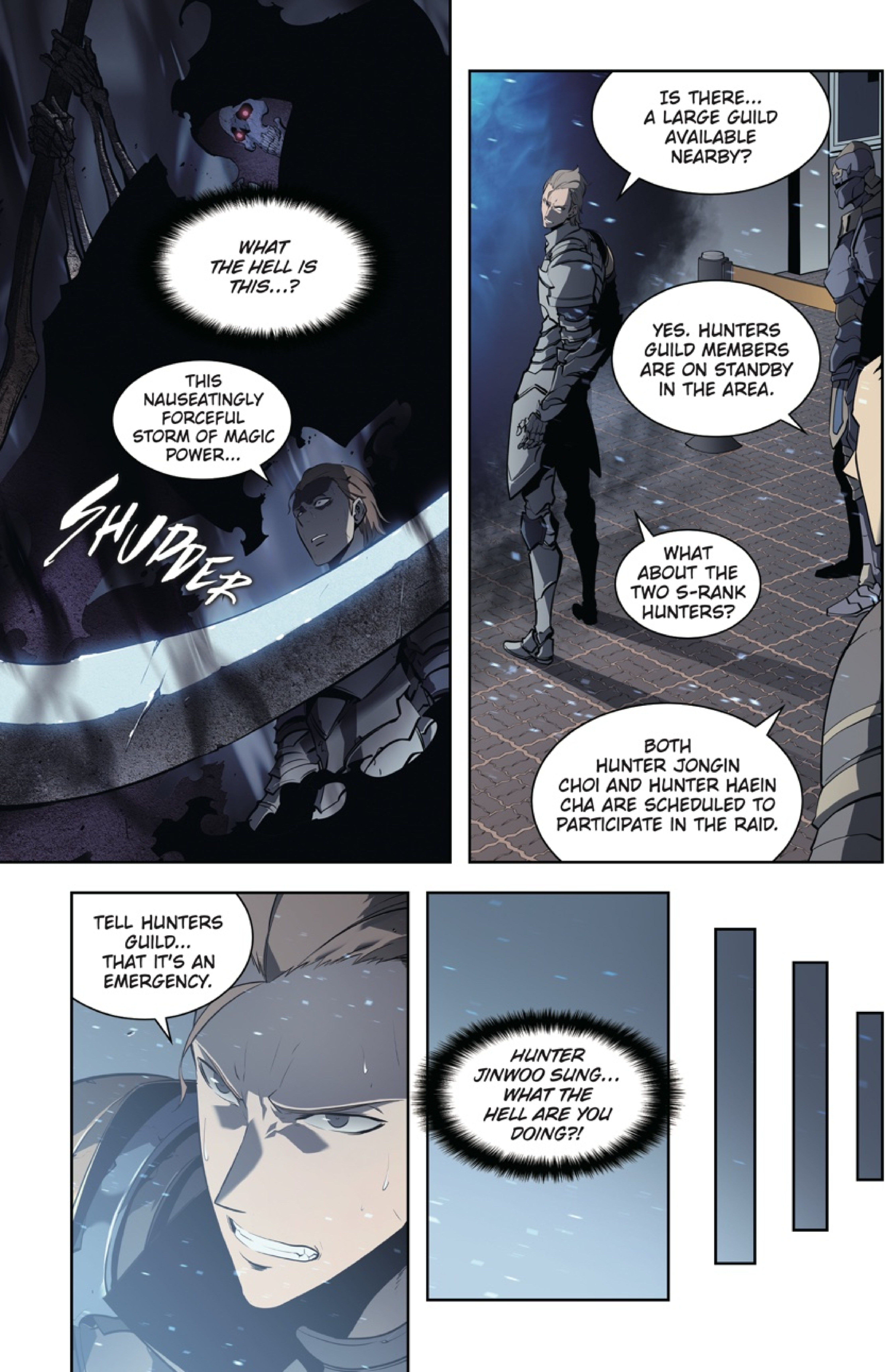

I AM THE FINAL TEST.
PING!
If you do not defeat the enemy by the designated time, your heart will stop.
Remaining time: 10:00


WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
Remaining time: 09:59
I've already told you that that was a stupid question, haven't I?
CRUMBLE
Fine, I'll answer you.
KRAK
Who am I?

I AM THE ARCHITECT OF THE SYSTEM.
I am the architect of the system.
HAS MY ANSWER SATISFIED YOU?
Has my answer satisfied you?

SURVEILLANCE TEAM MEMBERS, THIS WAY!
I'VE SUMMONED ALL SEVEN ELITE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION...
I KNOW WE'RE NOT REALLY GOOD ENOUGH TO HELP HUNTER SUNG.
BUT JUST IN CASE...

MANAGER WOO?
SIR?
FLINCH
WHAT THE...?
CHILLS
CAN'T YOU GUYS SENSE IT?


WHAT THE HELL IS THIS...?
THIS NAUSEATINGLY FORCEFUL STORM OF MAGIC POWER...
SHUDDER
IS THERE... A LARGE GUILD AVAILABLE NEARBY?
YES. HUNTERS GUILD MEMBERS ARE ON STANDBY IN THE AREA.
WHAT ABOUT THE TWO S-RANK HUNTERS?
BOTH HUNTER JONGIN CHOI AND HUNTER HAEIN CHA ARE SCHEDULED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RAID.
TELL HUNTERS GUILD... THAT IT'S AN EMERGENCY.
HUNTER JINWOO SUNG... WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!

KRIIIK
KRAK
RUMBLE

ZOOM
POW POW
POW POW
POW POW POW

SLAM
CRASH

ARGH!
THUD

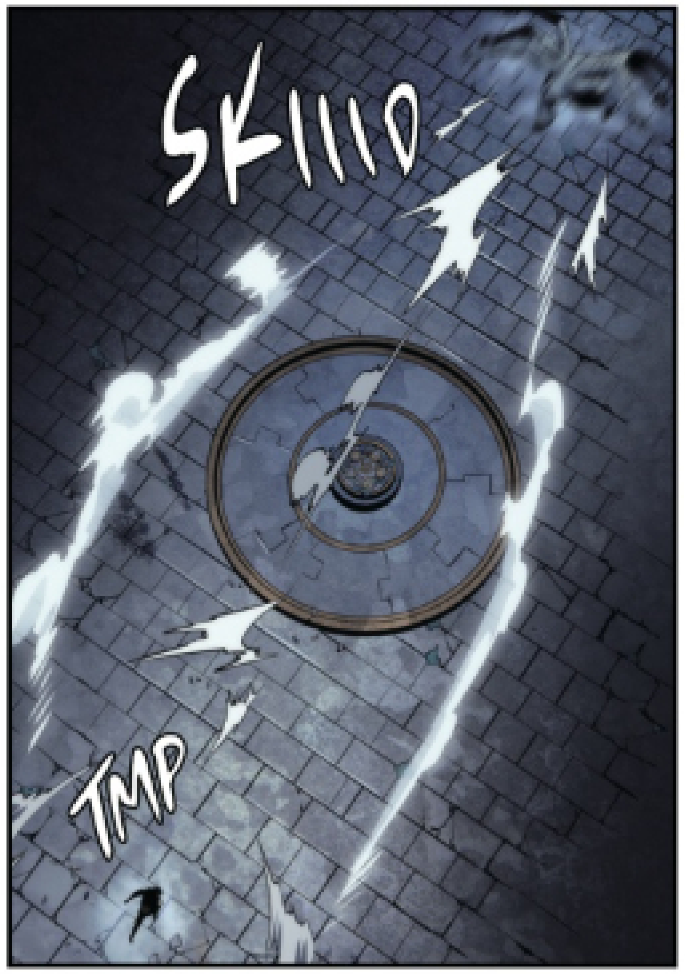
WHOOSH
POW POW POW
POW POW
POW POW
POW POW
KRIK

BA
BA
BA
BA
BAM

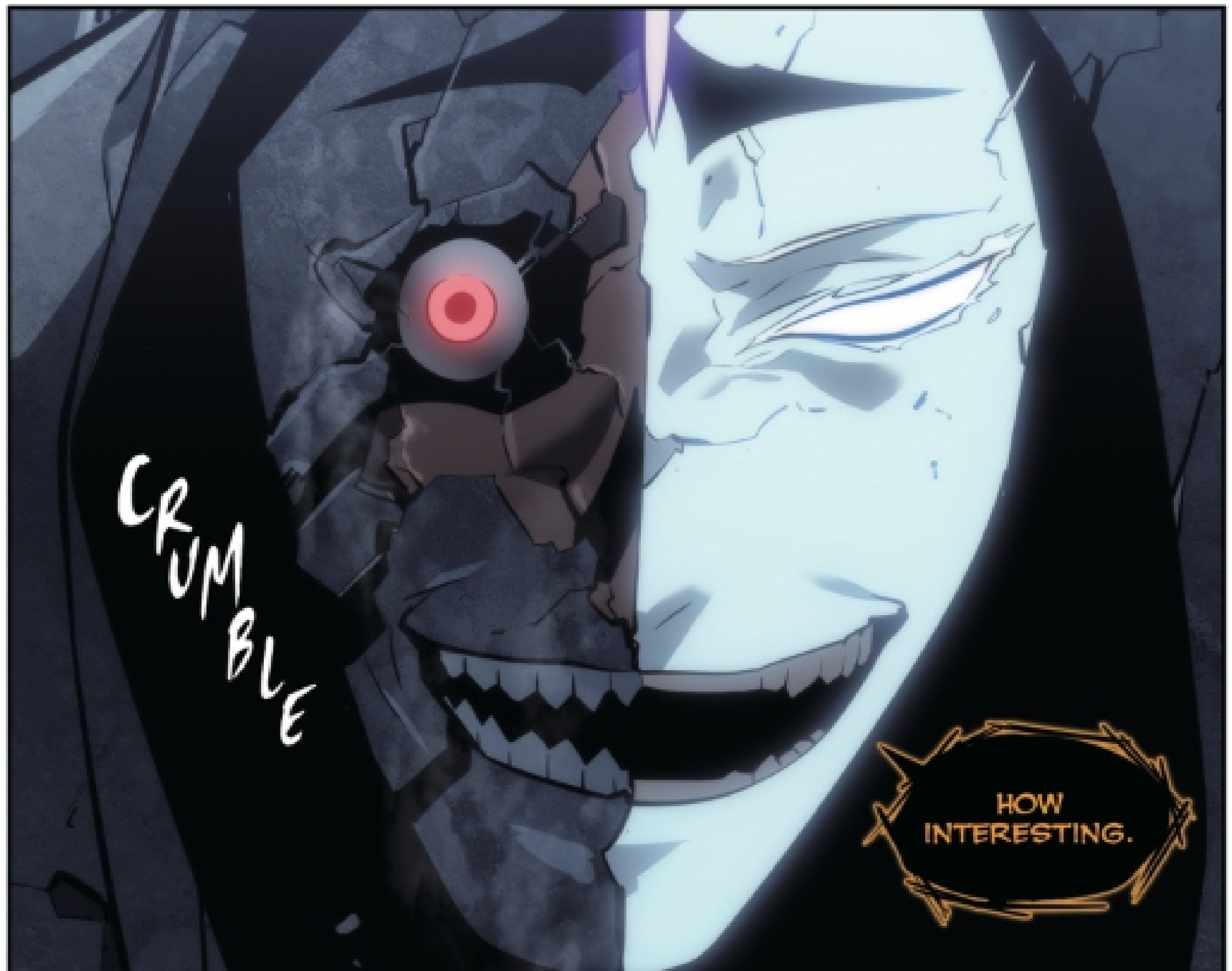
CRUMBLE
AMAZING. IT'S TRULY AMAZING!
YOU'RE EVEN BETTER THAN I DESIGNED YOU TO BE!
WHAM
WHAM
WHACK

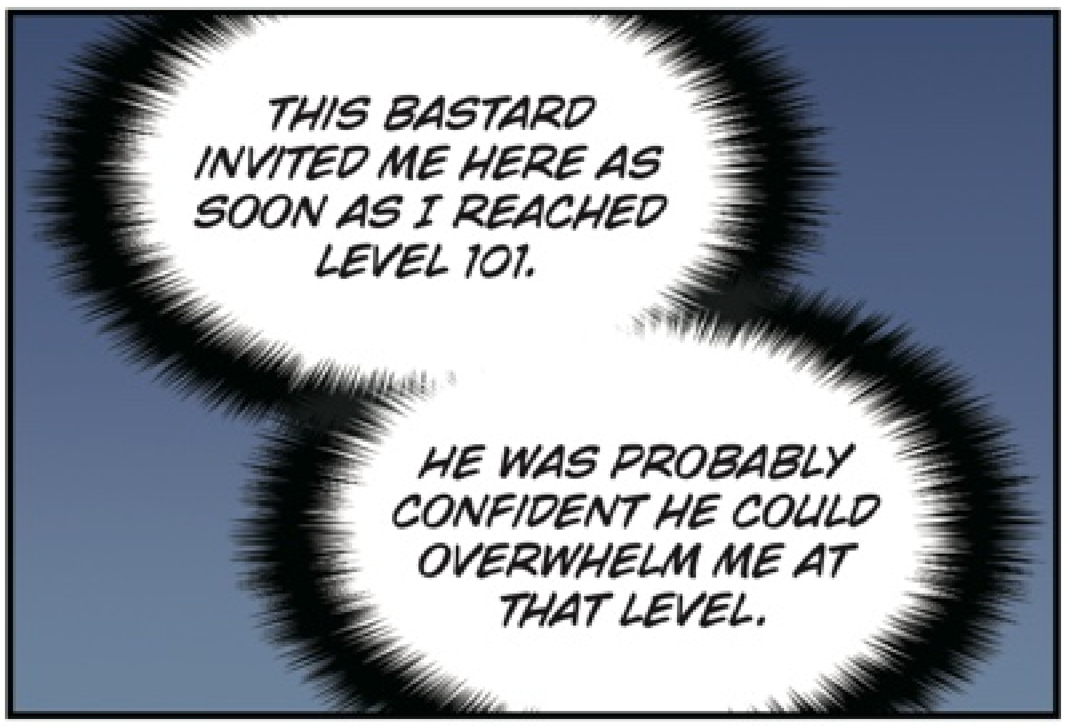
SPLATTER

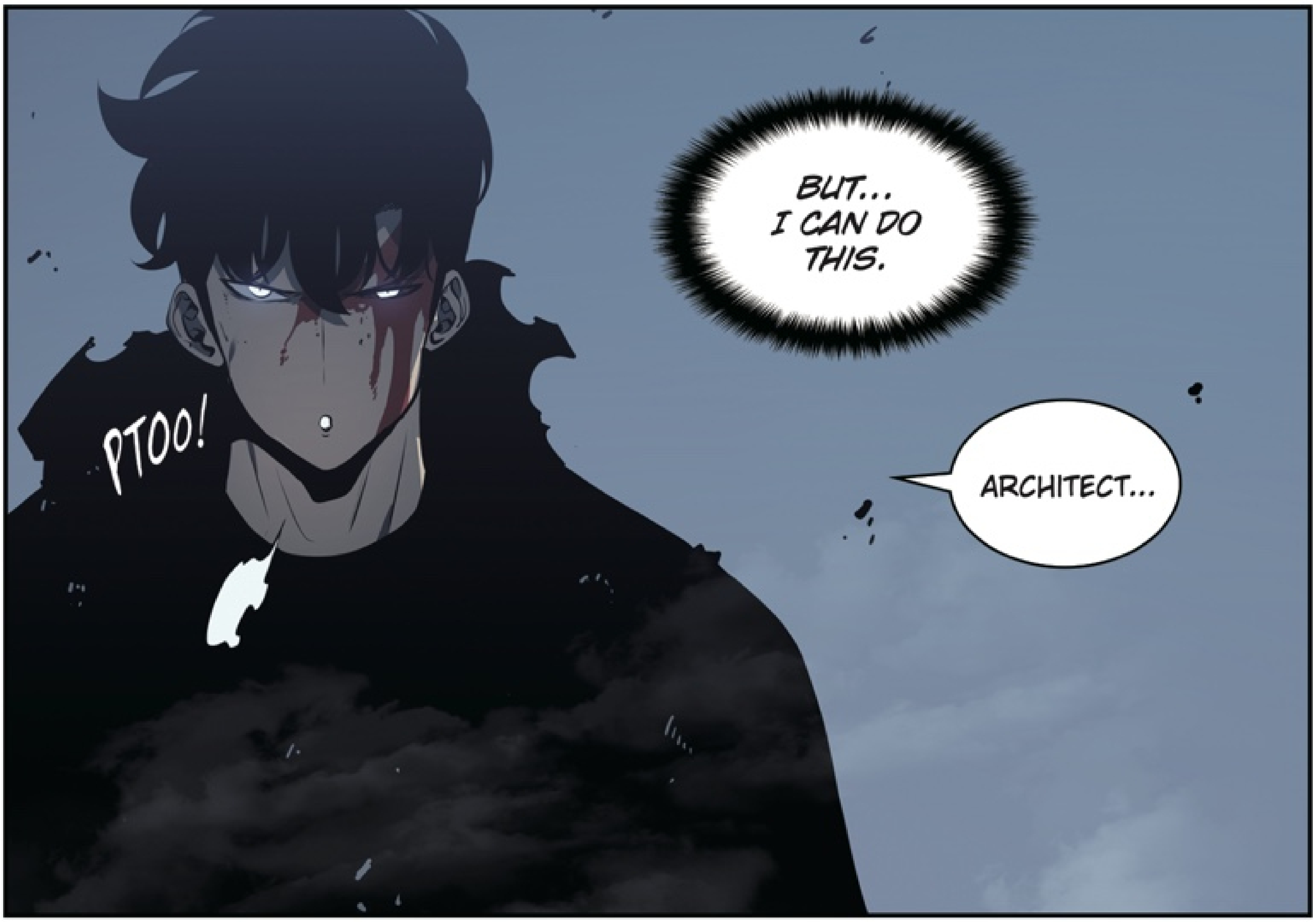
BANG


SKIIID
TMP

WHO KNEW I WOULD BE SO ENTERTAINED FIGHTING A HUMAN?
I NEVER EXPECTED A HUMAN COULD BE ANY MATCH FOR ME.


CRUMBLE
HOW INTERESTING.


THIS BASTARD INVITED ME HERE AS SOON AS I REACHED LEVEL 101.
HE WAS PROBABLY CONFIDENT HE COULD OVERWHELM ME AT THAT LEVEL.


BUT... I CAN DO THIS.
PTOO!
ARCHITECT...

THERE ARE SO MANY QUESTIONS I WANT TO ASK, BUT...
...FIRST AND FOREMOST, WHY DID YOU CHOOSE ME AS A PLAYER?

YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY?
I SEE...YOU'RE THINKING YOU WON'T GET THAT ANSWER IF YOU KILL ME, RIGHT?
I'M AT A DISADVANTAGE IN CLOSE-QUARTER BATTLES.
DASH
[Skill: Ruler's Authority] has been activated.
VMM
ARE YOU PLANNING TO ATTACK FROM A DISTANCE AND GET OUT?
VMM
NO WAY.

KABOOOM
THAT BASTARD CAN USE THE SAME SKILLS AS ME.
SO ATTACKING FROM A DISTANCE IS USELESS.
TMP
ZSH
WHETHER...

...YOU KILL ME OR NOT...
CLATTER
WOOM
...THE ANSWERS YOU CAN ACCESS WERE DECIDED...
WHOOOM
GRAB
...FROM THE MOMENT I BUILT IT ALL!

HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO BUILD ALL THIS?
AND HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO GIVE ME THIS KIND OF POWER?
I DIDN'T CHOOSE YOU. I WAS AGAINST CHOOSING YOU, IN FACT.
I ONLY BUILT AND ACTIVATED IT.
THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM, THAT IS.
MY DESIGN IS PERFECT.
Remaining time: 06:19
RUNNING OUT OF TIME. I HAVE TO FIGURE THIS OUT...!
LEAP
DURING THE REMAINING TIME, I SHALL USE MY FULL POWER TO FIGHT YOU.

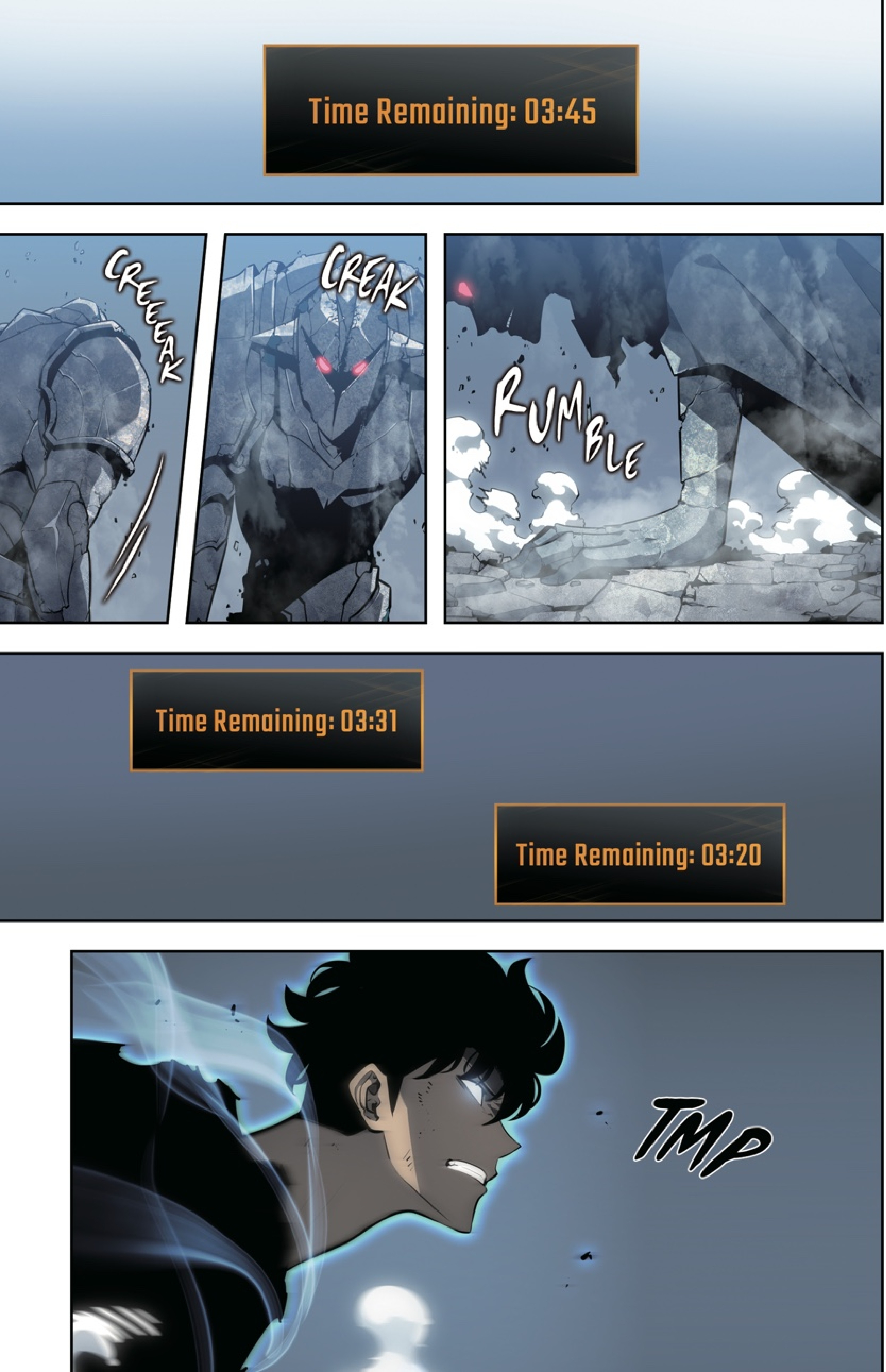
SLAM
WHOOOOOOSH
ZOOM
WHAT?
BADUM
BADUM
ALL OF MY SENSES HAVE GOTTEN SHARPER.

I CAN DO THIS.
A SWORD, A SPEAR, A BLADE...
...AN AX, AND A HAMMER.
I CAN SENSE THEM...

I CAN SENSE THIS BASTARD'S MOVES!
SLASH
WHOOM
WHOOOSH

HE'S BEEN ABLE TO BLOCK ALL MY FULL-POWER ATTACKS?
NOT ONLY THAT, HE'S GETTING FASTER!
SH-SHK
BAM
SH-SH-SHK
KLING
KA-KLANG
RRGH!
ALTHOUGH THIS ISN'T MY REAL BODY, YOU'VE CAUSED ME PAIN!

I SEE.
IS THIS WHY YOU'VE BEEN CHOSEN?
DUN
THERE'S ONLY A TRACE...
...BUT IT'S IN HIM.
TO THINK A MERE HUMAN WOULD...
HOW DARE YOU?!


Time Remaining: 03:45
CREEEAK
CREAK
RUMBLE
Time Remaining: 03:31
Time Remaining: 03:20
TMP

[Skill: Ruler's Authority]
has been activated.
VWOOM
BANG

Time Remaining: 03:15
DASH
WHAM
LEAP
KA
KA
KA
KLANG

SHUNK
WHOOSH
Time Remaining: 03:02
SLAM
NGH!
CREAK

IT'S THAT BASTARD...
!!
SHOOONG
...FROM LAST TIME...!
Time Remaining: 02:40
LEAP
SHATTER

Time Remaining: 02:21
KLANG
KA-
KLANG

BOOM
Time Remaining: 02:14
FSHHH
I'VE LOST.

THE TEST IS OVER.
Time Remaining: 02:11

THE ANSWER IS IN YOU.
IN ME?
PING!
THE CHOICE IS YOURS.
Retrieving data from storage.
Would you like to accept?
(Y/N)

Retrieving data from storage.
Would you like to accept?
(Y/N)
DATA FROM STORAGE...
......
YES.
I ACCEPT IT.

CHAPTER 26

The Black Heart

Solo
Leveling

You have successfully retrieved the data.
FLA
SH

WHOOM
ROAAAR

OH MY GOD...
I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MANY MAGIC BEASTS THERE ARE.

WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING AT?
FWIP

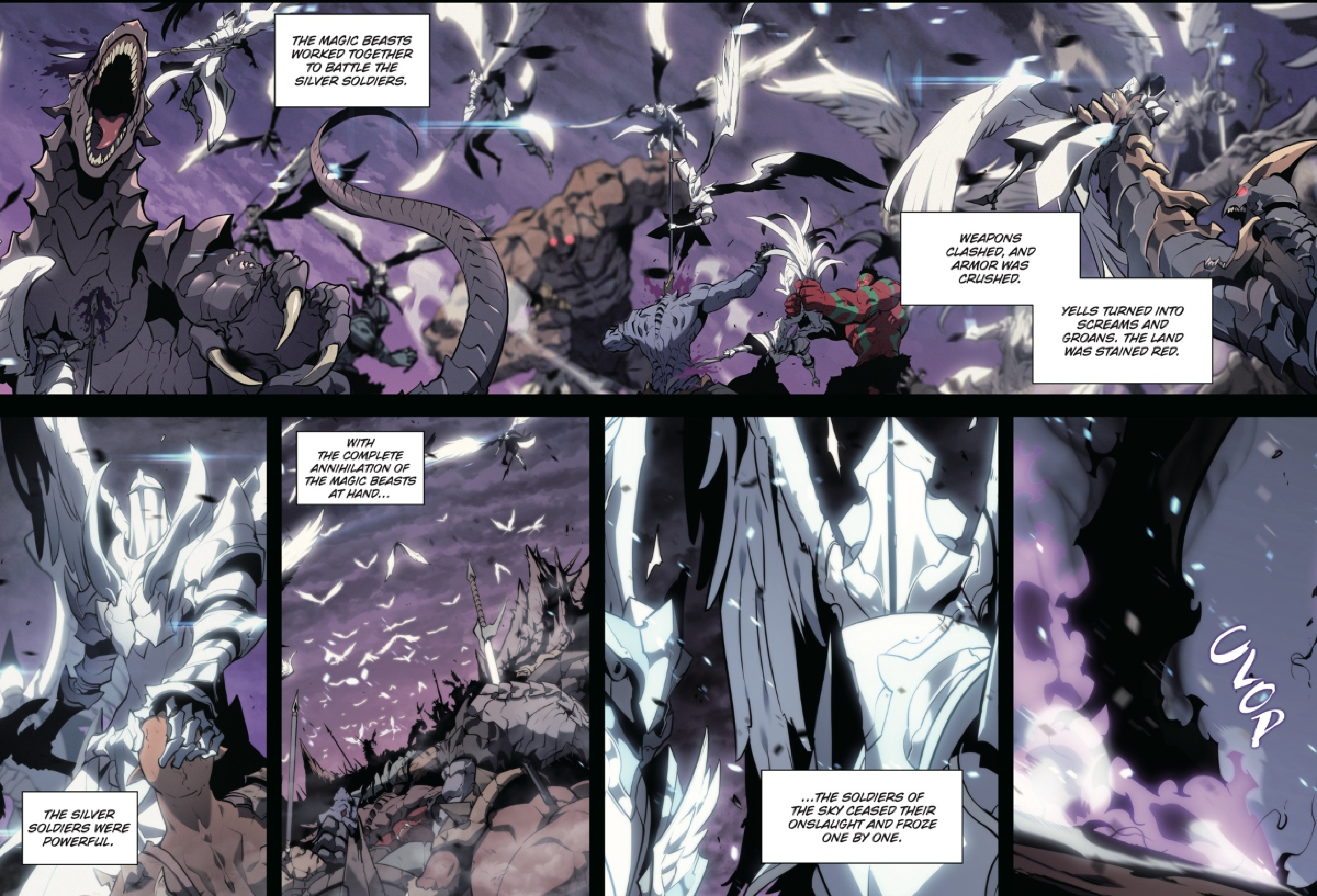
A PURPLE SKY AND ALL THESE MAGIC BEASTS...
THIS ISN'T EARTH, IS IT?

ICE ELVES, HIGH ORCS, GOBLINS, AND GIANTS...
IF THEY ESCAPED THROUGH A GATE, THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE WOULD BE DOOMED.

HOWEVER, THEIR OPPONENTS WEREN'T HUMANS.
KRAK
CRA
SH
I KNEW RIGHT AWAY...
...WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT.

WHOOOOSH

IT WAS WAR.



THE MAGIC BEASTS WORKED TOGETHER TO BATTLE THE SILVER SOLDIERS.
WEAPONS CLASHED, AND ARMOR WAS CRUSHED.
YELLS TURNED INTO SCREAMS AND GROANS. THE LAND WAS STAINED RED.
THE SILVER SOLDIERS WERE POWERFUL.
WITH THE COMPLETE ANNIHILATION OF THE MAGIC BEASTS AT HAND...
...THE SOLDIERS OF THE SKY CEASED THEIR ONSLAUGHT AND FROZE ONE BY ONE.
UVOP

THAT'S...
ARISE.
FSHHH
...MONARCH'S DOMAIN AND...

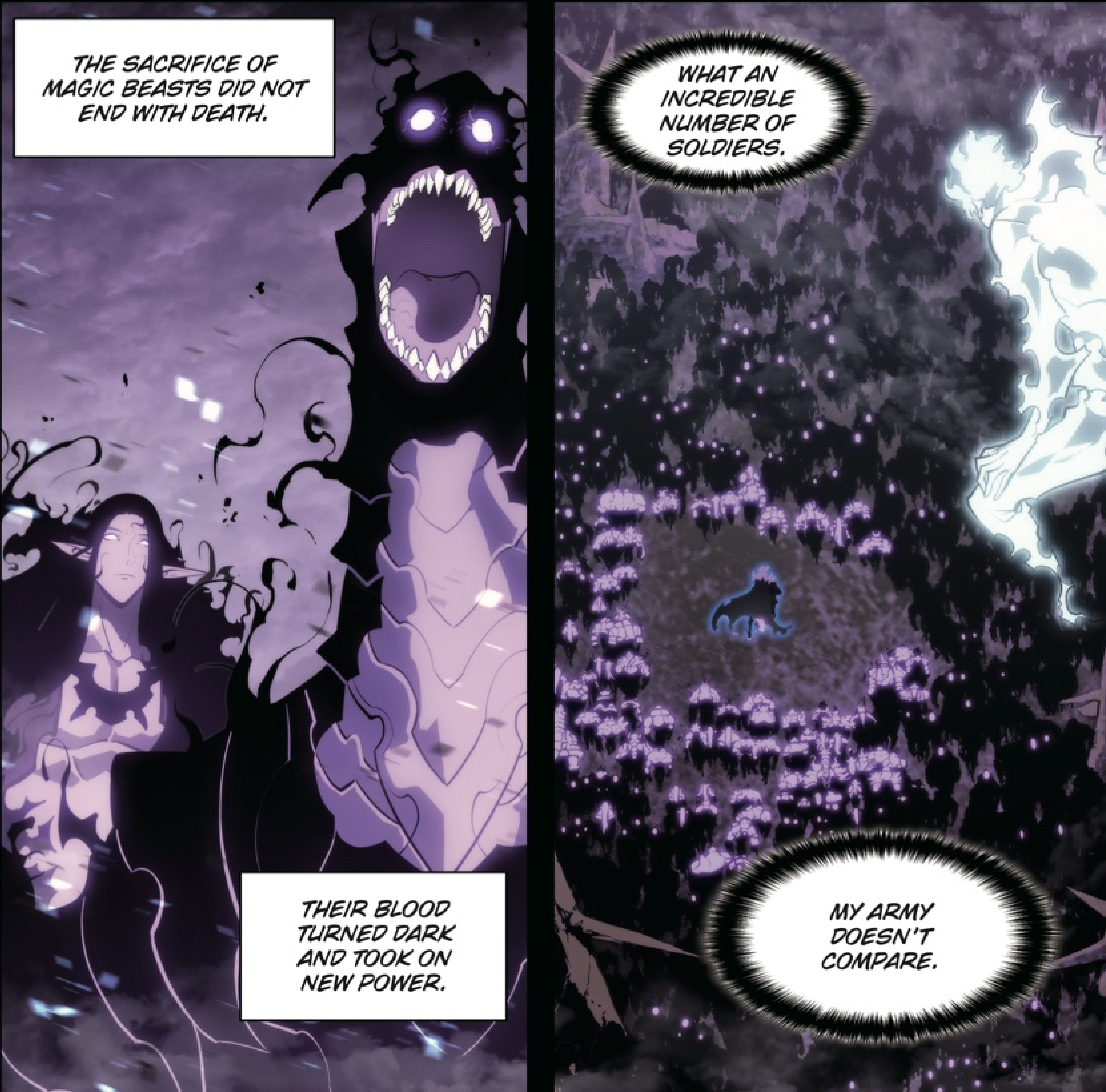
...SHADOW EXTRACTION!
GRRR...
GRRRRR...

COULD THAT BE...?

IS THAT THE SHADOW MONARCH?

IMMORTALITY

THE IMMORTAL ARMY



FSH
SHUNK
HHH

THE SILVER AND BLACK ARMIES CLASHED ON THE GROUND.
THE SOUNDS OF EXPLOSION SHOOK THE EARTH.
THE WAR COULD'VE ENDED IN A MASSACRE, BUT IT CONTINUED.

THE APPEARANCE OF ONE BEING CHANGED THE TIDE OF WAR.
SHHK
SHHK
SHHK
SWING
DASH
NEIGH

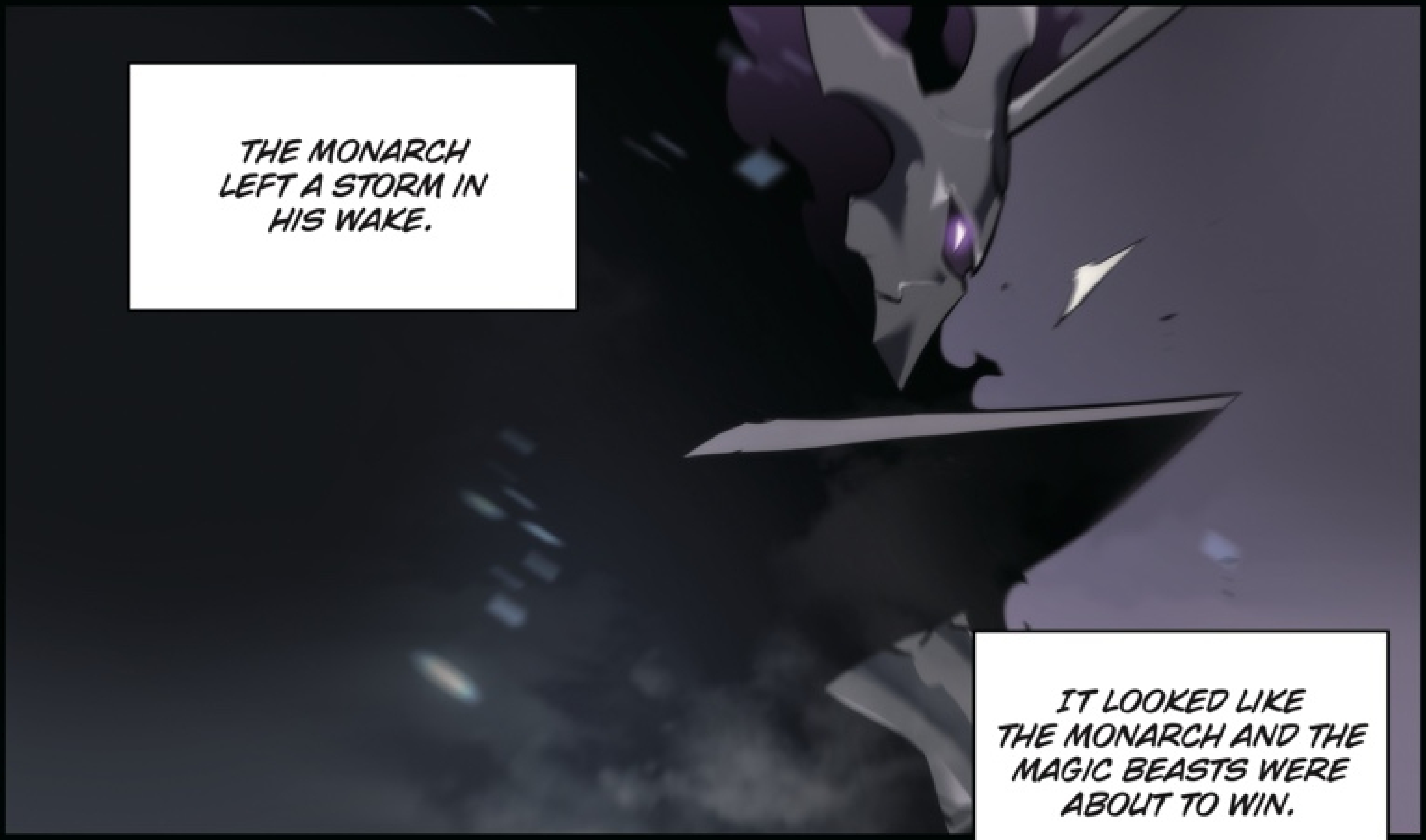
GALLOP
GALLOP

WHISH

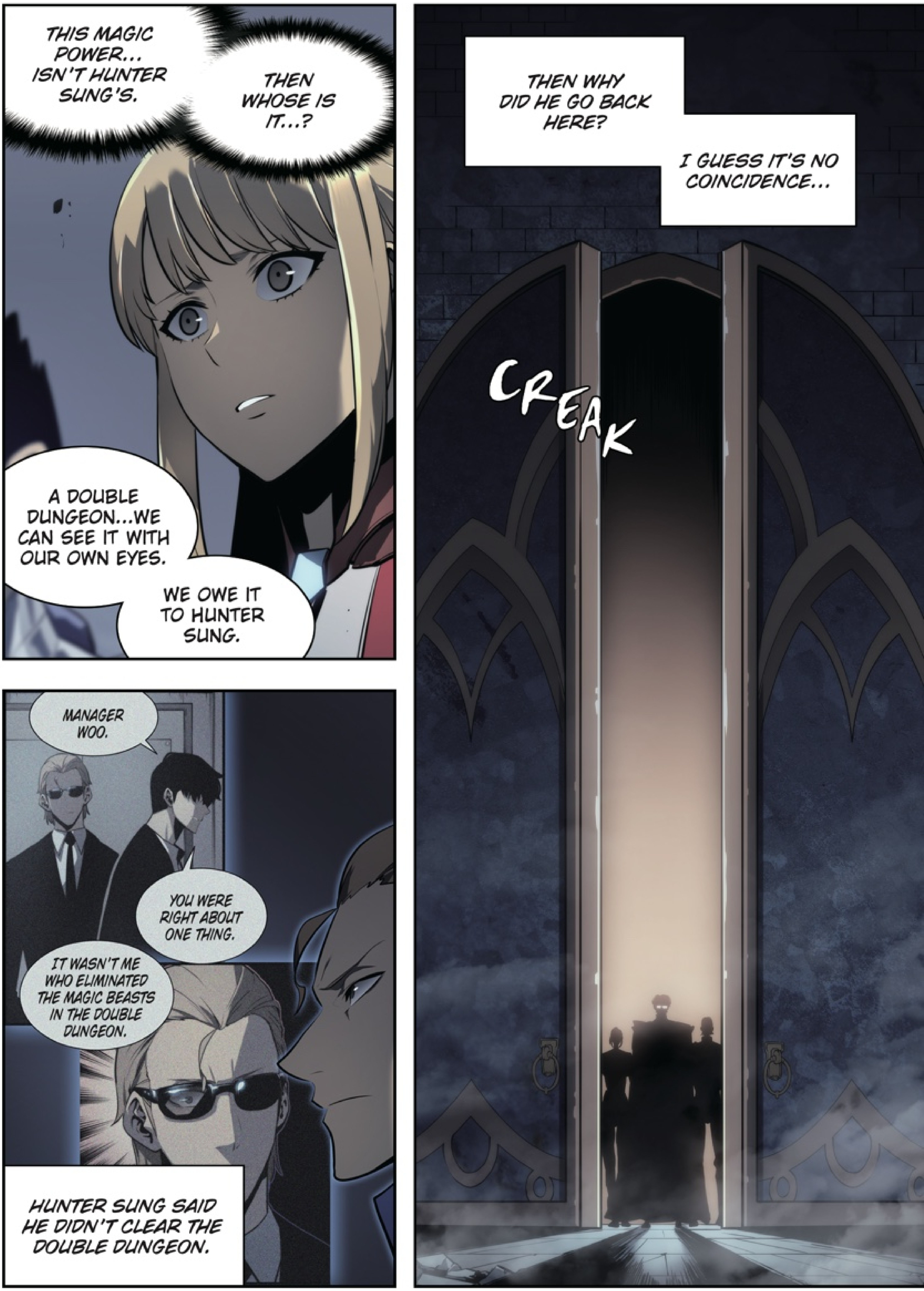
CRAASH
DAAASH

RULER'S AUTHORITY...

SHADOW SOLDIERS RAVAGED THEIR ENEMIES WHILE CONTINUOUSLY DYING AND REGENERATING.


THE MONARCH LEFT A STORM IN HIS WAKE.
IT LOOKED LIKE THE MONARCH AND THE MAGIC BEASTS WERE ABOUT TO WIN.

THAT IS, UNTIL
THEY SHOWED UP.
CAN YOU HANDLE IT?
WHAT AN INCREDIBLE MAGIC POWER...
YOU SAID HUNTER SUNG WAS INSIDE?
AFFIRMATIVE.


THIS MAGIC POWER... ISN'T HUNTER SUNG'S.
THEN WHOSE IS IT...?
A DOUBLE DUNGEON...WE CAN SEE IT WITH OUR OWN EYES.
WE OWE IT TO HUNTER SUNG.
MANAGER WOO.
YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING.
IT WASN'T ME WHO ELIMINATED THE MAGIC BEASTS IN THE DOUBLE DUNGEON.
HUNTER SUNG SAID HE DIDN'T CLEAR THE DOUBLE DUNGEON.
THEN WHY DID HE GO BACK HERE?
I GUESS IT'S NO COINCIDENCE...
CREAK

WHAT...
...WHAT ON EARTH IS THIS?
THEY DESCRIBED... ALL OF THIS.
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS PLACE?
THE STATUE OF A GOD, THE OTHER STONE STATUES—EVERYTHING...!

WHAT'S THIS?
I DON'T REMEMBER INVITING ANY HUMANS HERE.
THIS IS UNEXPECTED.
CREAK
DID THAT THING...JUST SPEAK?
I'M NOT HEARING THINGS, RIGHT?
A MAGIC BEAST THAT SPEAKS OUR LANGUAGE?

BE QUIET. YOU'RE INTERRUPTING HIS HIGHNESS'S SLEEP.

HIS HIGHNESS...?

HUNTER JINWOO SUNG... WHAT IS HE DOING THERE?
SLASH

MIGHTY HUMANS.
YOU'LL MAKE A SUFFICIENT FIRST OFFERING FOR THE KING.

ZZZZZT

ZZT
ZZT

RICARDO, PATHOS, LOKHAN, INGLEIAS...
...AND EVEN RADAR FROM ESIL'S CLAN...
CRASH
THUD

WHOOSH
GRR...
WHISH

H-HEAL! HURRY!!

PULL YOURSELVES TOGETHER!
PUT THE INJURED AT THE BACK.
HANG ON, MYUNGCHUL! HEALERS ARE WORKING ON YOU!
THE ENEMY IS COMING!!
THOSE OF YOU STILL STANDING AFTER MY PUPPETS HAVE FALLEN...
...WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS THE GLORIOUS REBIRTH OF THE KING.

FLICKER
THAT'S IF EVEN ONE SURVIVES...
EVERYONE, DUCK!
ZAAAP

KRA-KOOOOOM
SKIIID
FLASH

FWOOSH
BOOM
DESTROY THE STONE STATUES!
FLAP
SWING
POW
......!

THE STONE IS HARDER THAN I THOUGHT...!
BANG
THEIR PHYSICAL RESISTANCE IS TOO HIGH!
BE CAREFUL, EVERYONE!
FWIIISH
THIS KIND OF MAGIC DOESN'T WORK ON THEM EITHER?
DO THEY HAVE STRONG RESISTANCE AGAINST MAGIC TOO...?

PRESIDENT CHOI, PROVOCATION SKILLS DON'T WORK ON THEM!
I CAN'T MOVE THESE STATUES EVEN AN INCH WITH MY LOWER-LEVEL PSYCHOKINESIS!
DAMN IT, WHAT CAN WE DO?
WE NEED TO WAKE UP HUNTER SUNG!

IS HE HYPNO-TIZED?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, BUT THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO WAKE HIM UP!
FWOOSH
!!

BANG
HOW DARE YOU INTERRUPT HIS HIGHNESS'S SLEEP?!
SWING
LEAP

SLAM
HUNTER CHA! WE'VE GOT THIS, SO PLEASE WAKE HIM UP!!
DASH
I'M ON IT!
DAAASH

SHADOW SOLDIERS ARE REPEATEDLY DYING AND REGENERATING.
IF THAT WERE ME WITH MY CURRENT STATS, MY MANA WOULD HAVE HIT ROCK BOTTOM.
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE HAS SO MUCH MANA—IT'S HARD TO GAUGE ITS LIMITS.
THE DEMONS AND ANIMAL-TYPE MAGIC BEASTS APPEARED FROM TWO GATES...
...MERCILESSLY DESTROYING SHADOW SOLDIERS.
IF THIS WAR IS BETWEEN THE MAGIC BEASTS AND THE SILVER SOLDIERS, THERE IS NO REASON FOR THEM TO FIGHT SO FIERCELY.
ISN'T THE SHADOW MONARCH ON THE SIDE OF MAGIC BEASTS?
SO...

...INFIGHT-
ING?!

TMP
WE COULD HAVE ENDED THE WAR TODAY.
WHY DID YOU BETRAY ME?
IT'S...TOO BAD. IT WOULD'VE BEEN A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO FINISH YOU.

I ASKED WHY YOU BETRAYED ME.
HEH-HEH...

GRAB
KRIIIK

CRUSH
THOSE EYES.

I'VE SEEN THEM BEFORE...
BADUM
BADUM
WHUMP
BADUM
BADUM
BADUM

BA DUM
BALAN... THE DEMON MONARCH?
WHY... IS BALAN HERE?
BA DUM
?!
BADUM

HUH...?
HOW...? WHY DIDN'T I REALIZE UNTIL NOW?
BA DUM
BA DUM
BA DUM

BA DUM
BA DUM
BA DUM
BA DUM
BA DUM
BA DUM
BA DUM
BA DUM
FWIP

FSHHH

Data retrieval is complete.

YOU'RE ENTER-TAINING.
VERY FUN.
KEEP TRYING TO DEVIATE FROM MY PLAN.
SWORD DANCE!
SHING
THAT'S IT!

JUST LIKE THAT! HA-HA-HA-HA!
CLANG
KA-CLANG
CLANG
KA-CLANG

SHUNK
AAGH!
HA-HA. IS THAT IT?
IT ENDS JUST AS I DESIGNED. THIS ISN'T FUN. NOT FUN AT ALL, HUMANS.

MY DESIGN PREDICTS AND RESPONDS TO ANY RESULT.
SOMETHING THIS SMALL CAN'T BREAK MY DESIGN.
I GUESS THERE WON'T BE ANY MORE SURPRISES.

KA
BOOM
WE NEED TO WAKE UP HUNTER SUNG.
WE HAVE NO CHOICE.
WHOOSH

BOOOOM
CLATTER
TMP TMP
YOU AVOIDED MY ATTACK...NOT BAD AT ALL.

A SHADOW?
FLOAT
THEY CAN'T COME OUT DUE TO THE RULES OF THIS ROOM, BUT I SEE THEY'RE THERE.
A HUMAN WITH SHADOWS FROM THE KING.
HOW DID YOU FIND THIS PLACE?
HOW ARE YOU CONNECTED TO JINWOO SUNG?

...FRIENDS.
WE'RE... FRIENDS.
HERE TO SAVE HUNTER SUNG.
SO IT'S NOT THE KING'S WILL? I SHALL BLESS YOU WITH AN OPPORTUNITY.
TODAY, ONE OF THE NOBLE SOVEREIGNS SHALL DESCEND UPON THIS WORLD.
I SHALL BLESS YOU WITH THE CHANCE TO WITNESS THIS GLORIOUS MOMENT IN HISTORY.
EVERY HUMAN EXCEPT YOU...

...WILL DIE RIGHT HERE.

SAYS WHO?
......?!

KA-
BLAM
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO TO MY BODY?
YOU.
CRUMBLE

STOMP
......
YOU'RE NOT THE KING.
HOW COULD YOU BE HERE...
...INSTEAD OF HIS HIGHNESS?
HOW ARE YOU MAINTAINING YOUR OWN CONSCIOUSNESS EVEN AS THE BLACK HEART BEATS WITHIN YOU?

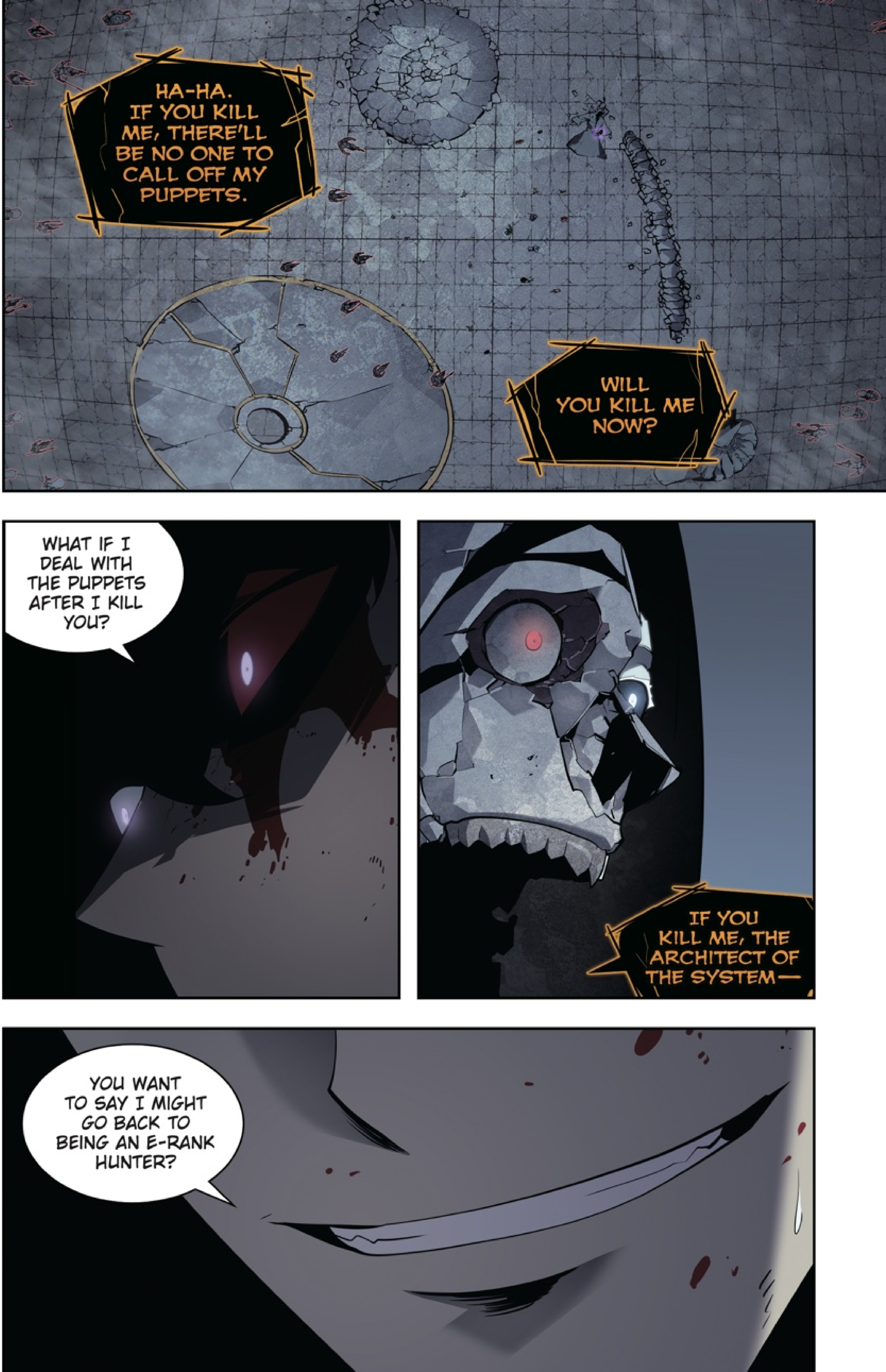
THE BLACK HEART.
BA DUM
BA DUM
BA DUM

[Title : Demon Hunter]
The required conditions have been fulfilled.
You have recovered the memories of defeating Balan, the Demon Monarch of White Lightning. A great power has accepted the Player as its owner.
Buff — Black Heart: MP: +100,000
MP: 109,433
IS THE HEART THE REASON FOR THE INSANE JUMP IN MP?

I'M CERTAIN OF TWO THINGS FROM HIS REACTION.
ONE IS THAT THE BLACK HEART IN MY BODY WAS NEVER INTENDED BY THAT BASTARD.
THE OTHER ONE IS THE BLACK HEART WASN'T FOR MY BENEFIT.
THE RETRIEVED DATA WASN'T THE ANSWER. I HAVEN'T HEARD EVERYTHING YET.
YOU SAID YOU WERE AGAINST CHOOSING ME AS A PLAYER.
TELL ME WHAT A PLAYER IS!
WHAT WERE YOU PLANNING ON DOING TO ME?
IMPOS-SIBLE...

SHADOW MONARCH, YOU!
DO YOU THINK THE OTHER MONARCHS WILL JUST SIT BACK AND LET THIS HAPPEN?!
VWM
VWOOM
ANSWER MY QUESTION.

HA-HA-HA... THIS IS SO UNEXPECTED.
I SOMEWHAT UNDERSTAND WHY HE HAS CHOSEN YOU.
AH...!
WHAT THE—?
TH-THOSE THINGS!
THE STATUES...
CREAK
CREAK
...STARTED MOVING!


HA-HA. IF YOU KILL ME, THERE'LL BE NO ONE TO CALL OFF MY PUPPETS.
WILL YOU KILL ME NOW?
WHAT IF I DEAL WITH THE PUPPETS AFTER I KILL YOU?
IF YOU KILL ME, THE ARCHITECT OF THE SYSTEM—
YOU WANT TO SAY I MIGHT GO BACK TO BEING AN E-RANK HUNTER?

SEE, I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT TOO.
YOU KNOW, EVEN IF THE ARCHITECT OF THE SYSTEM DISAPPEARED, I DOUBT THAT THE WHOLE SYSTEM WOULD COLLAPSE.
YOU'VE FORCED MY HAND, THEN...!!
DING
PING
DING
PING
DING
DING

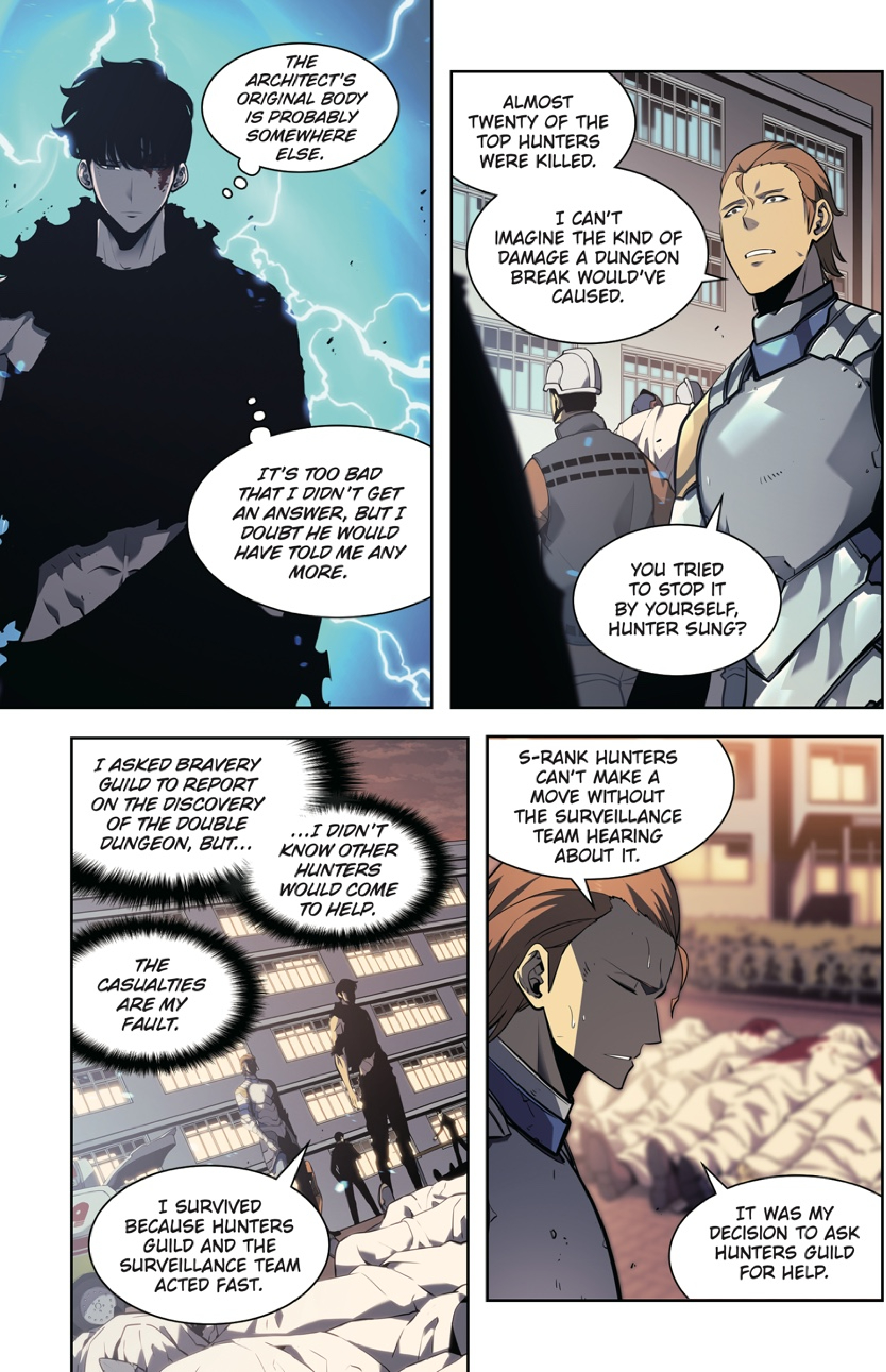
DING
System administrator access denied.
DING
System administrator access denied.
PING
System administrator access denied.
HOW IS THE SYSTEM—?!
SEE, ONE DAY...
...A THOUGHT CAME TO ME.

THE SYSTEM WILL USE ME...
...AND I WILL USE THE SYSTEM.
THIS IS NO COINCIDENCE, NOR IS IT BENEVOLENCE.
CRUMBLE
THE SYSTEM HAS A MOTIVE.
IT NEEDS A STRONG JINWOO SUNG.
IF THE SYSTEM THINKS IT'S JUST MADE ME ITS PAWN...
RUMBLE
...I'LL HAVE TO PROVE IT WRONG.
I'LL DEVOUR THE SYSTEM.
I HAD TO DEVOUR THE SYSTEM.
IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR SYSTEM DESIGN SUCKS BIG-TIME.
GAAAAAH! YOU BASTARD...!

PREDIC-
TION...
...NO...
SHATTER
...I HAVE A PROPHECY FOR YOU.
WHEN THE FIRE PILLARS OF HEAVEN ARE ERECTED...
CLATTER
KLAK
CRUMBLE
...THE UNAVOIDABLE DEATH WILL VISIT YOU.
......
NO PROBLEM.

IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S BEEN OVER AN HOUR SINCE THE HUNTERS' TEAM WENT INSIDE...
WHAT'S GOING ON?
WE WOULD'VE BEEN IN BIG TROUBLE IF WE HAD GONE INSIDE.
HUNTERS ARE COMING OUT!

INCREDIBLE! THE HUNTERS' ELITE LOOK THAT MISERABLE?!
WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT C-RANK GATE?
ARE YOU GUYS BRAVERY GUILD?
COULD YOU PLEASE TRANSPORT THE BODIES OF THE DECEASED HUNTERS?
DECEASED HUNTERS?
Y-YES! OF COURSE!!


THE ARCHITECT'S ORIGINAL BODY IS PROBABLY SOMEWHERE ELSE.
IT'S TOO BAD THAT I DIDN'T GET AN ANSWER, BUT I DOUBT HE WOULD HAVE TOLD ME ANY MORE.
ALMOST TWENTY OF THE TOP HUNTERS WERE KILLED.
I CAN'T IMAGINE THE KIND OF DAMAGE A DUNGEON BREAK WOULD'VE CAUSED.
YOU TRIED TO STOP IT BY YOURSELF, HUNTER SUNG?
I ASKED BRAVERY GUILD TO REPORT ON THE DISCOVERY OF THE DOUBLE DUNGEON, BUT...
...I DIDN'T KNOW OTHER HUNTERS WOULD COME TO HELP.
THE CASUALTIES ARE MY FAULT.
I SURVIVED BECAUSE HUNTERS GUILD AND THE SURVEILLANCE TEAM ACTED FAST.
S-RANK HUNTERS CAN'T MAKE A MOVE WITHOUT THE SURVEILLANCE TEAM HEARING ABOUT IT.
IT WAS MY DECISION TO ASK HUNTERS GUILD FOR HELP.

THAT RESULTED IN THIS TRAGEDY...
HOW DID YOU KNOW THERE WAS A DOUBLE DUNGEON HERE?
THE DUNGEON SUMMONED ME.
IT... SUMMONED YOU?
YES. I RECEIVED A MESSAGE TO COME HERE.

MAY I SEE THAT MESSAGE?
I CAN ONLY SEE IT IN MY HEAD.
HE WOULDN'T BE JOKING, CONSIDERING THE CASUALTIES...
HE'S... HE'S SOMEONE I CAN'T APPLY COMMON SENSE TO.
ARE YOU OKAY, HUNTER SUNG?
YES, OF COURSE...

NO, I MIGHT BE...
WOBBLE

...A LITTLE BIT TIRED...
SWAY

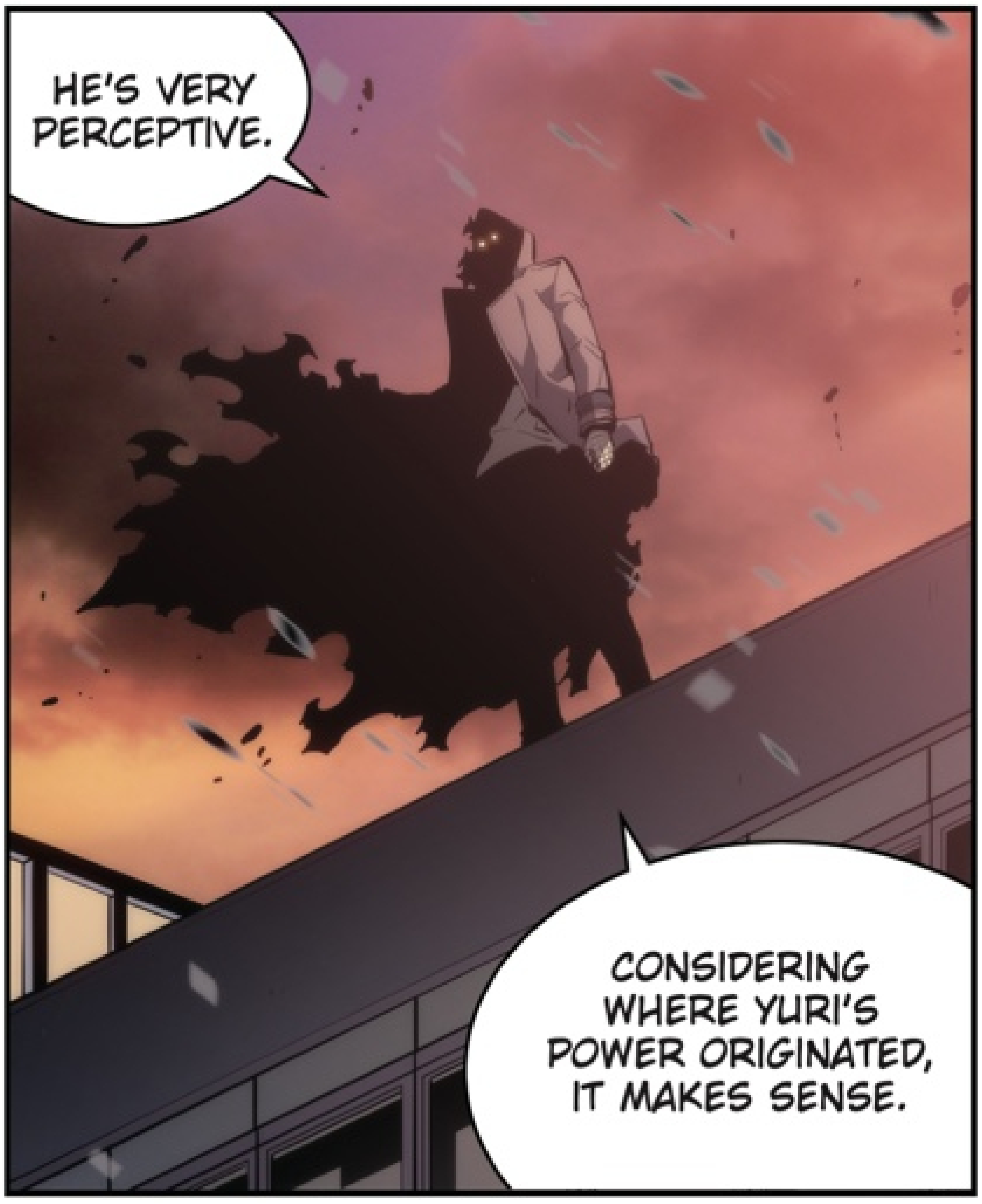
HUNTER SUNG!!
WHUMP
HUNTER JINWOO SUNG!!

Solo Leveling

CHAPTER 27
A Tragedy Planned

CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER
<200,000 TONS OF MANA STONES.>
<SHOULD BE ENOUGH MAGIC POWER FOR THE CIRCLE.>
<I'LL DRAW A CIRCLE AROUND THE GATE AND USE THESE STONES TO ACTIVATE IT.>
<ONCE ACTIVATED, IT WILL DRAW THE MAGIC POWER ON ITS OWN.>

<WELL, NOW... ISN'T THAT ODD?>
<HUH? WAS THERE AN ERROR?>
<NO, THE MAGIC CIRCLE IS PERFECT. JUST...>
<I CAN SENSE SOMEONE NEARBY.>
<WHAT?>
<WHO ARE YOU?>
<WHERE ARE YOU HIDING?>
<THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANYONE LEFT, SINCE THE DUNGEON BREAK IS TOMORROW, RIGHT?>
<I DIDN'T SAY IT WAS A HUMAN, DID I?>
<HUH?>


HE'S VERY PERCEPTIVE.
CONSIDERING WHERE YURI'S POWER ORIGINATED, IT MAKES SENSE.

FINALLY...
...IT BEGINS.

DUUUN
EVERYTHING IS PROGRESSING AS PLANNED.
TOWARD TRAGEDY.

KEEP OUT KEEP OUT KEEP
<The most advanced firearms don't work on magic beasts...>
<...so why is the military here?>
<In case Yuri Orloff fails...>
<...they'll draw attention to themselves to buy time for hunters to prepare their attack. >
<They're... human shields?>
<We're no different from them as long as we're on the front line.>

<We simply affirm how helpless humans are in the face of disaster.>

<EXCELLENT. IT'S PERFECT.>

<I MIGHT BE ABLE TO CLEAR THE S-RANK GATE BY MYSELF!>

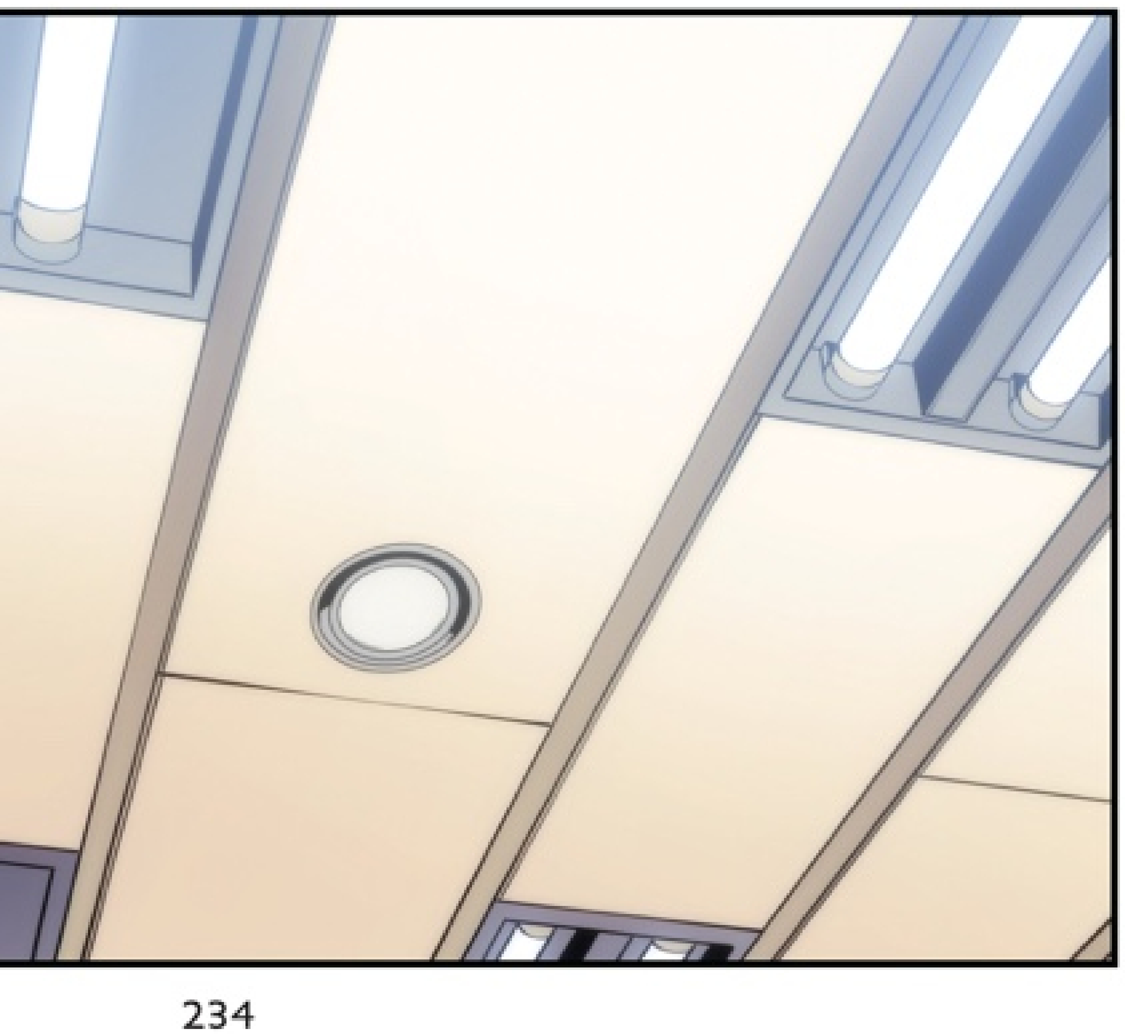
<I WOULD'VE LIKED THE TITLE OF "FIRST MAN TO CLEAR AN S-RANK GATE BY HIMSELF," BUT NO MATTER...>
<UNFORTUNATELY, THAT TITLE IS ALREADY TAKEN BY ANOTHER HUNTER, SO I CAN'T EVEN WISH FOR IT.>
<M-MR. ORLOFF! YOU CAN'T DRINK—!>
CHAK
<I'M HAVING A CELEBRATORY DRINK! A TOAST. RELAX, YOU'RE ABOUT TO WITNESS THE BEST SHOW EVER.>

<HOW MANY S-RANK HUNTERS ARE ON STANDBY?>
GULP
<FIFTEEN IN TOTAL, SIR.>
<THAT'S TOO SMALL AN AUDIENCE FOR THIS SHOW.>

<WHAT IS THE UNITED STATES DOING?>
<WHY DON'T THEY SEND S-RANK HUNTERS TO JAPAN?>
<AN S-RANK GATE HAS APPEARED IN MARYLAND.>
<I HEARD THAT THE SAME THING HAS HAPPENED IN ENGLAND AND INDIA, NOT JUST JAPAN...>

<THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH HUNTERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.>
<OH...!>
<THE GATE!>
SHA
<THE GATE IS OPEN!>
TTER

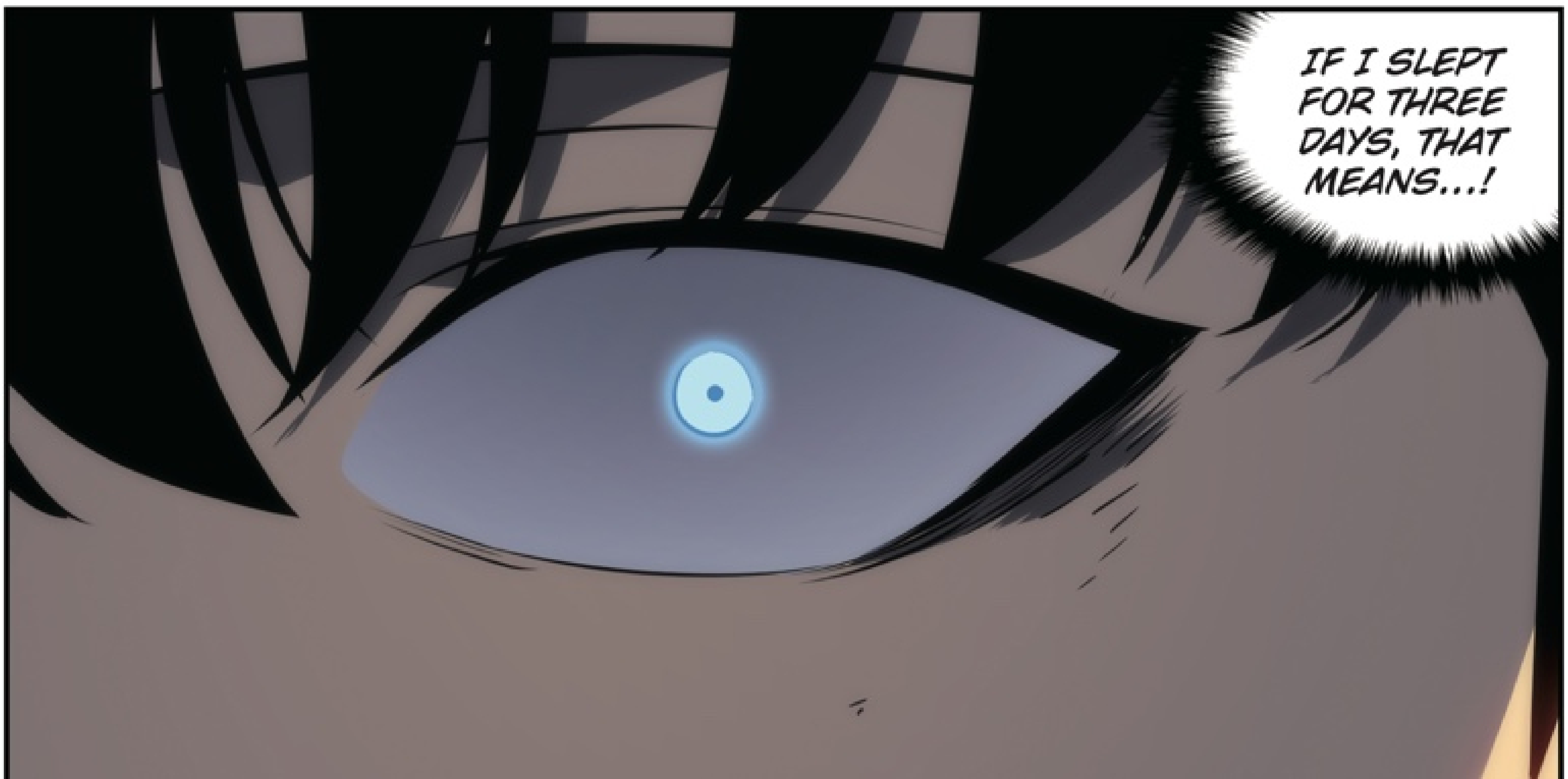
JOLT



A HOSPITAL...?
SHF

BOSS!
RATTLE
JINHO?
WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU'RE ONLY JUST NOW WAKING UP?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE REALLY DEAD.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'VE SLEPT FOR THREE DAYS!
I'VE SLEPT FOR THREE DAYS?
YES! I WAS REALLY WORRIED ABOUT YOU, BOSS!
THREE DAYS... I GUESS I WAS PRETTY EXHAUSTED.
I HADN'T RESTED IN A WHILE...

AND...I CAN'T SHAKE THE IMAGES THE ARCHITECT PUT IN MY HEAD.
WAIT...


IF I SLEPT FOR THREE DAYS, THAT MEANS...!

JINHO, WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?
PARDON? TO WHAT?
THE S-RANK GATE IN JAPAN.
OH...
I MEAN...

STOMP
STOMP
<G-giants!>
<They're giants!>

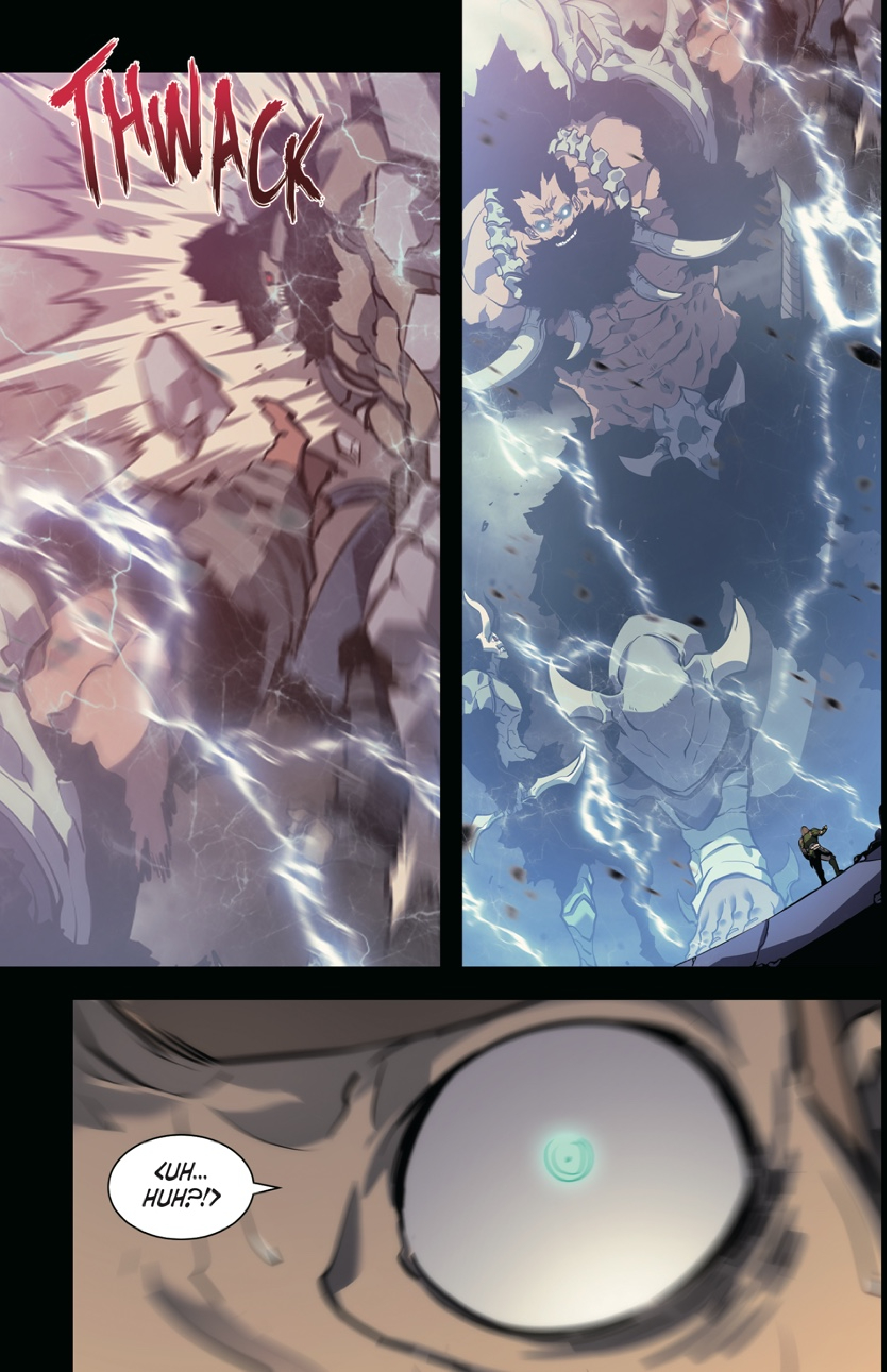
<They're bosses of A-rank gates, but they're coming out right away?!>

<I CAN HANDLE THIS, NO PROBLEM.>

<COME AT ME!!>

WHISH
WHIIIISH
VWOOOOOM
ZZZ
ZZZ

ZZZZ
WHAM
BAM
ZZZT
<AH-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA! I CAN'T BELIEVE ONLY A-RANK GATE MAGIC BEASTS HAVE COME OUT!>
<DO THOSE BASTARDS THINK THEY CAN GET THROUGH MY BARRIER?!>
GRAB
<HUH?>


THWACK
<UH... HUH?!>

SHI
NG

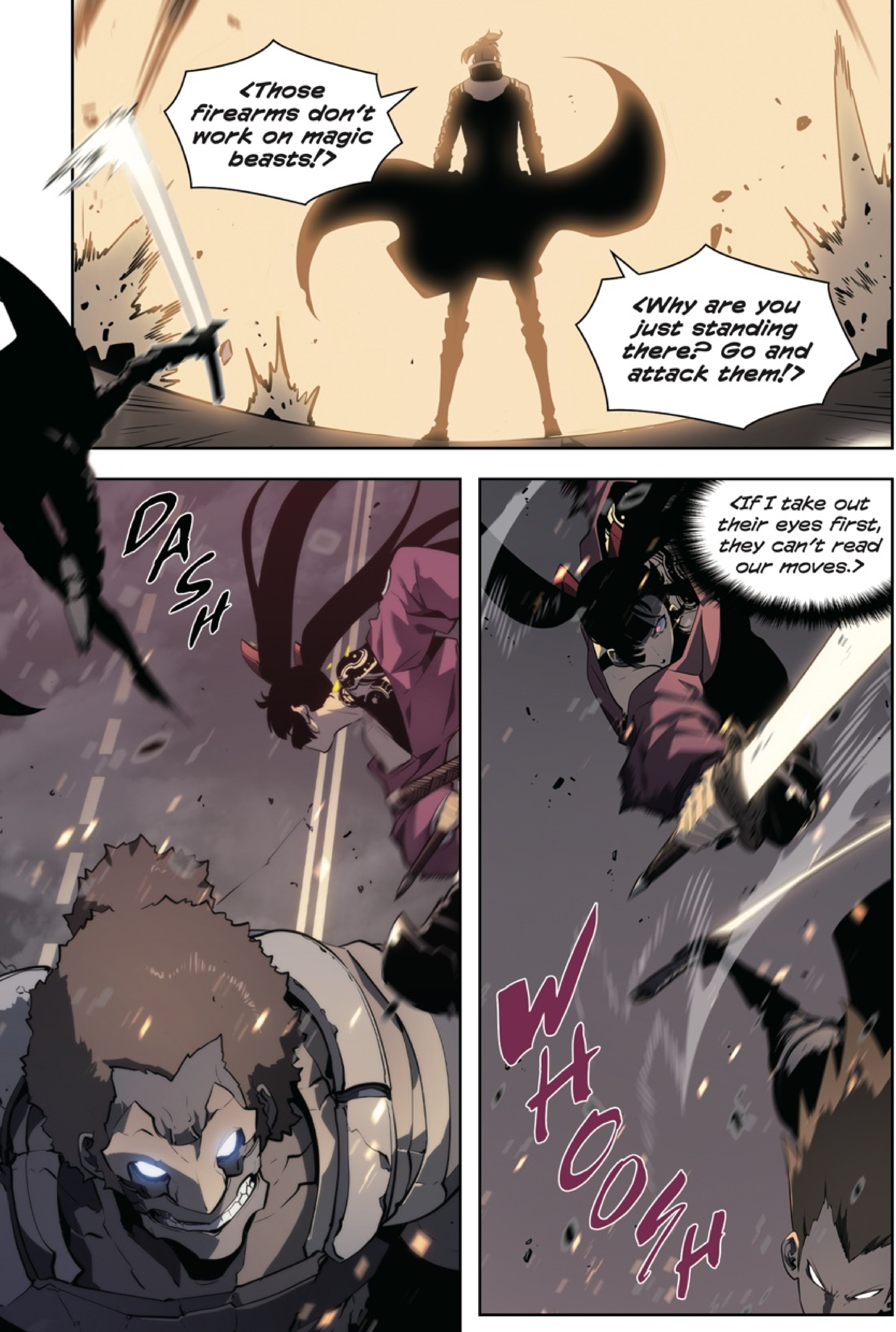
SLASH
BOSS...
THE RAID...
...FAILED.

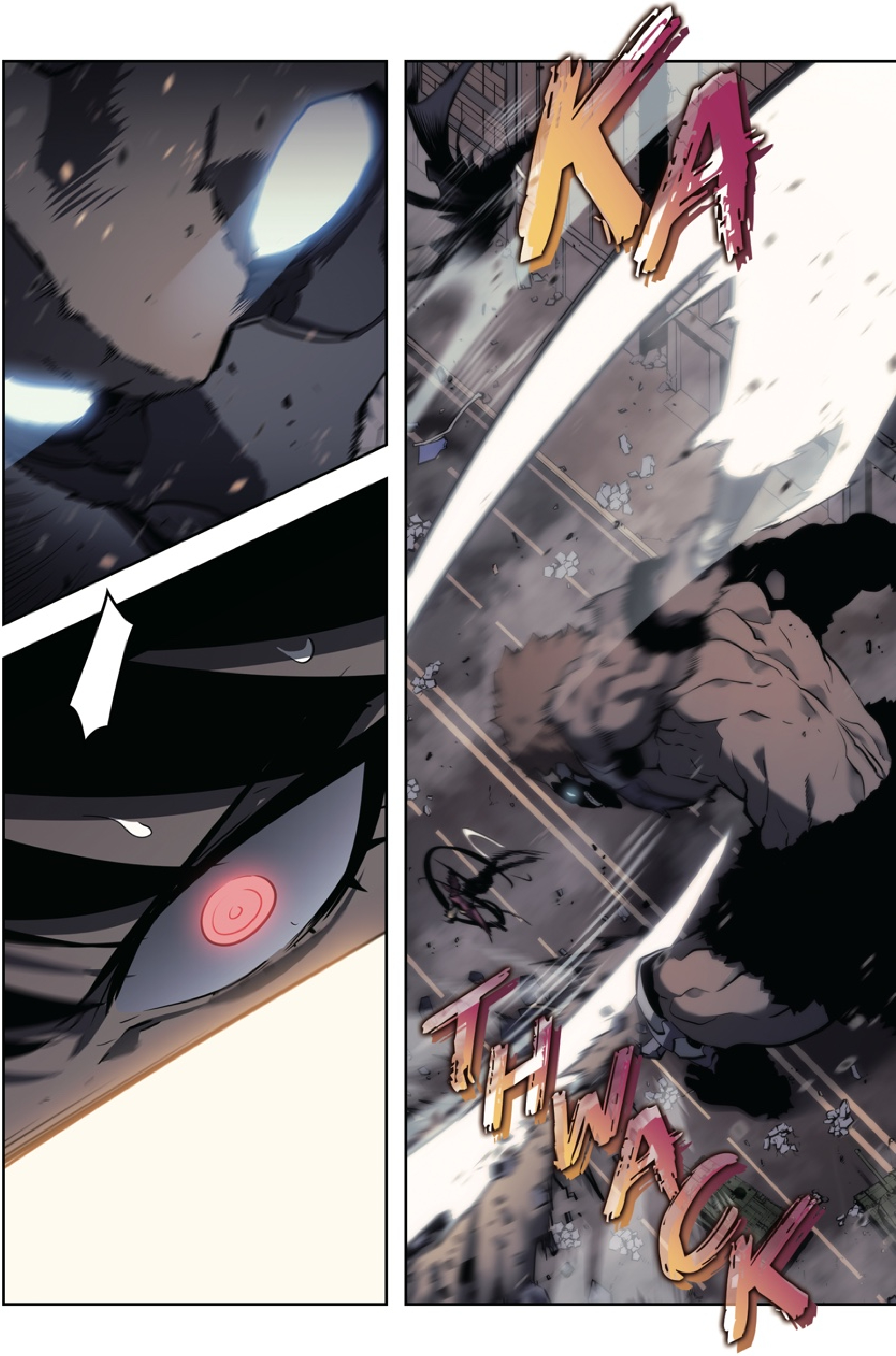
MYUNGHAN YOO
AHH...
I GUESS I DOZED OFF. HOW LONG WAS I OUT?
YOU WERE ASLEEP FOR TWENTY-THREE HOURS AND FORTY-SIX MINUTES, SIR.
AS PER YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, I WAS WAITING WITH THE INTENTION OF TAKING YOU TO THE HOSPITAL...
...IF YOU DIDN'T WAKE UP WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.
THERE ARE TWO MATTERS AT HAND.
THERE ARE REPORTS THAT A PATIENT WITH THE ETERNAL SLEEP DISEASE HAS AWAKENED.
SHF
AN ETERNAL SLEEP DISEASE PATIENT WOKE UP?

YES.
AND THAT PATIENT IS THE MOTHER OF HUNTER JINWOO SUNG.
DOES HE EVEN HAVE AN ABILITY TO HEAL THE ETERNAL SLEEP DISEASE?
...I SEE.
WHAT'S THE OTHER NEWS?
SO...
...YOUR DAUGHTER HAS COME TO SEE YOU.
KACHAK
HOW LONG... HAVE YOU BEEN LIKE THIS?

DROP
CHOMP
<AHHHH!!?

BANG
BANG
BANG
BOOM
KA BOOM
BA
BA
BA
BANG
BA
BA
BANG


<Those firearms don't work on magic beasts!>
<Why are you just standing there? Go and attack them!>
DASH
<If I take out their eyes first, they can't read our moves.>
WHOOSH


KA
THWACK

<What a crazy monster!>
<It's quick for something with such a huge body!>
We're above Tokyo!
It's a horrific scene that can be seen from afar!
TAKA TAKA TAKA

It's like looking into hell.
All eyes are on the hunters hoping they can stop this tragedy.
IF THIS CONTINUES, JUST LIKE THE JEJU ISLAND RAID...
...ALL OF ASIA WILL BE IN DANGER. I NEED TO HURRY—
Breaking News
Situation in Japan
Breaking
In The Skies Over Tol
Casualties Cont
Difficult To Stop
DON'T GO.

PLEASE DON'T GO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?
I KNOW YOU WILL.
GRIT

......

NO,
I WON'T.
I'M GOING TO REST A WHILE SINCE I'VE WORKED SO MUCH.
SHF

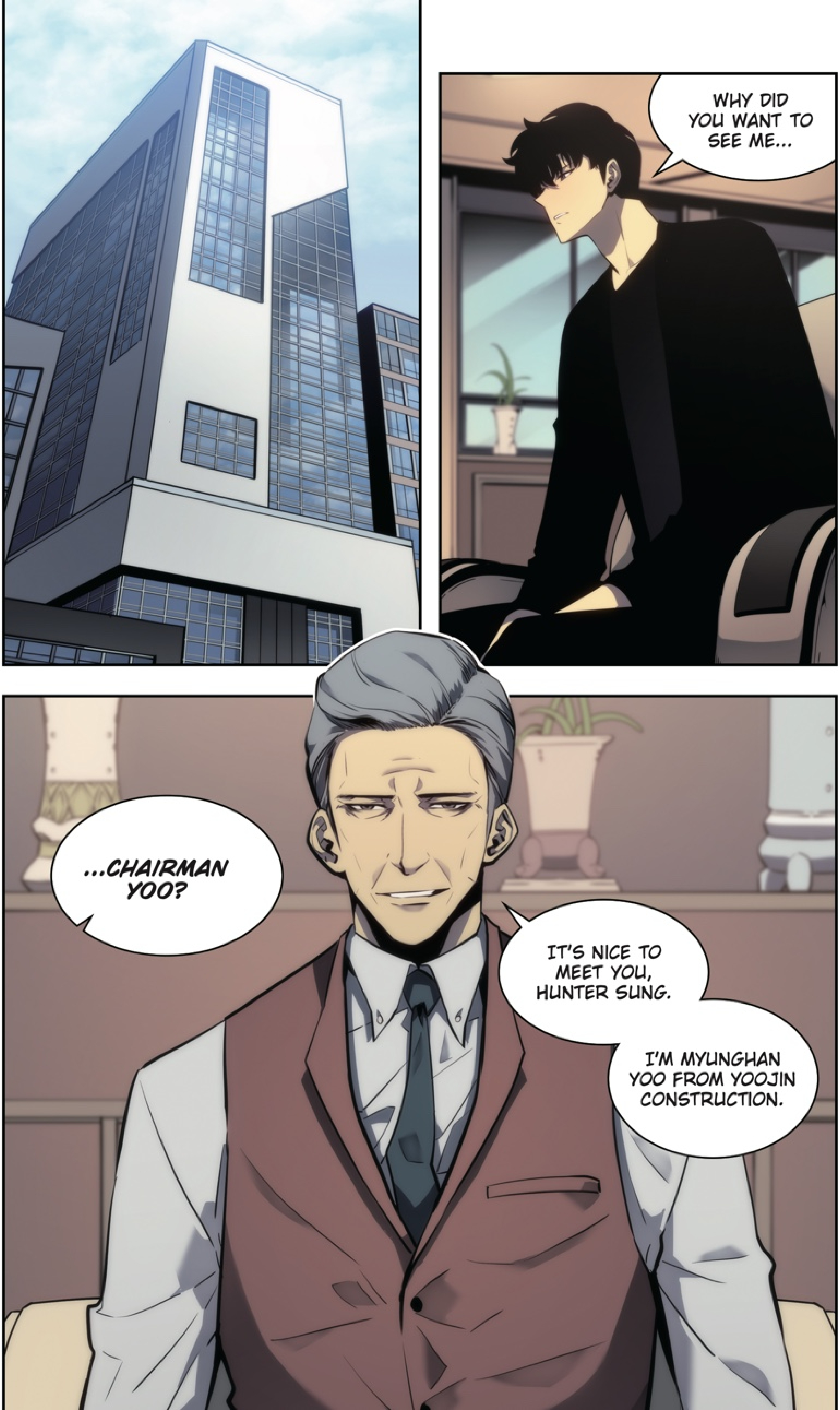
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
PAT

BERU.
YOUR HIGHNESS. I MEAN... MASTER.
I ASKED YOU TO GUARD JINAH, BUT I KNOW YOU'RE WATCHING TV.
FLINCH
HOW'S JINAH DOING?
SHE SLEEPS A LOT EVERY DAY, MASTER.

SHE'S TRAUMATIZED.
THE ONLY TIME SHE'S EVER ASKED ME TO AVOID A RAID WAS MY FIRST ONE FOUR YEARS AGO.

WHAT SHOULD I DO...?
VROOM

HUH?
SKRRT


WHY DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME...
...CHAIRMAN YOO?
IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU, HUNTER SUNG.
I'M MYUNGHAN YOO FROM YOOJIN CONSTRUCTION.

!
SHF
YOUR NAME:
MEMO:
DATE:
SIGN.
123456
I'M NOT ARROGANT ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THAT MONEY CAN BUY ANYTHING.
ESPECIALLY WHERE IT CONCERNS AN S-RANK HUNTER.
I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU CONSIDERED THIS AS A TOKEN OF MY APPRECIATION.

WHATEVER HE'S ABOUT TO TELL ME IS NEVER TO BE MADE PUBLIC.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT JOINING HIS GUILD.
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUY FROM ME, MR. YOO?
......
THE TRUTH IS, I HAVE THE SAME ILLNESS THAT YOUR MOTHER SUFFERED FROM.

DOES JINHO KNOW?
OTHER THAN MY DOCTOR, ONLY THREE PEOPLE KNOW—MY WIFE, MY SECRETARY, AND ME.
AND I'M THE FOURTH.
THAT'S RIGHT.
I'VE SEARCHED THE WORLD OVER FOR A CURE, BUT I'VE ONLY DISCOVERED ONE PATIENT...
...WHO HAS BEEN FREED FROM THIS ILLNESS.

YOUR NAME:
PAY TO:
DATE:
MEMO:
CHECK NO:
SIGN:
123456
I DON'T BELIEVE IT'S A COINCIDENCE THAT THE ONLY PERSON TO BE CURED OF THE ETERNAL SLEEP DISEASE IS YOUR MOTHER, HUNTER SUNG.
WHAT I'D LIKE FROM YOU IS THE TRUTH.
IF YOU HELP ME, I WILL FOREVER BE IN YOUR DEBT.
ALL DAY TODAY...

...I'VE BEEN FORCED TO MAKE DECISIONS.

<This is ghastly.>
<They knock down buildings, and uproot trees...>
<It's like they're trying to erase every trace of humanity from the place.>
<Th-then what about us...?>
<Worst of all...they eat humans.>
<As long as we stay high enough and beyond their reach, it's a hundred percent safe.>
<Trust me—we've determined this through multiple reconnaissance missions.>

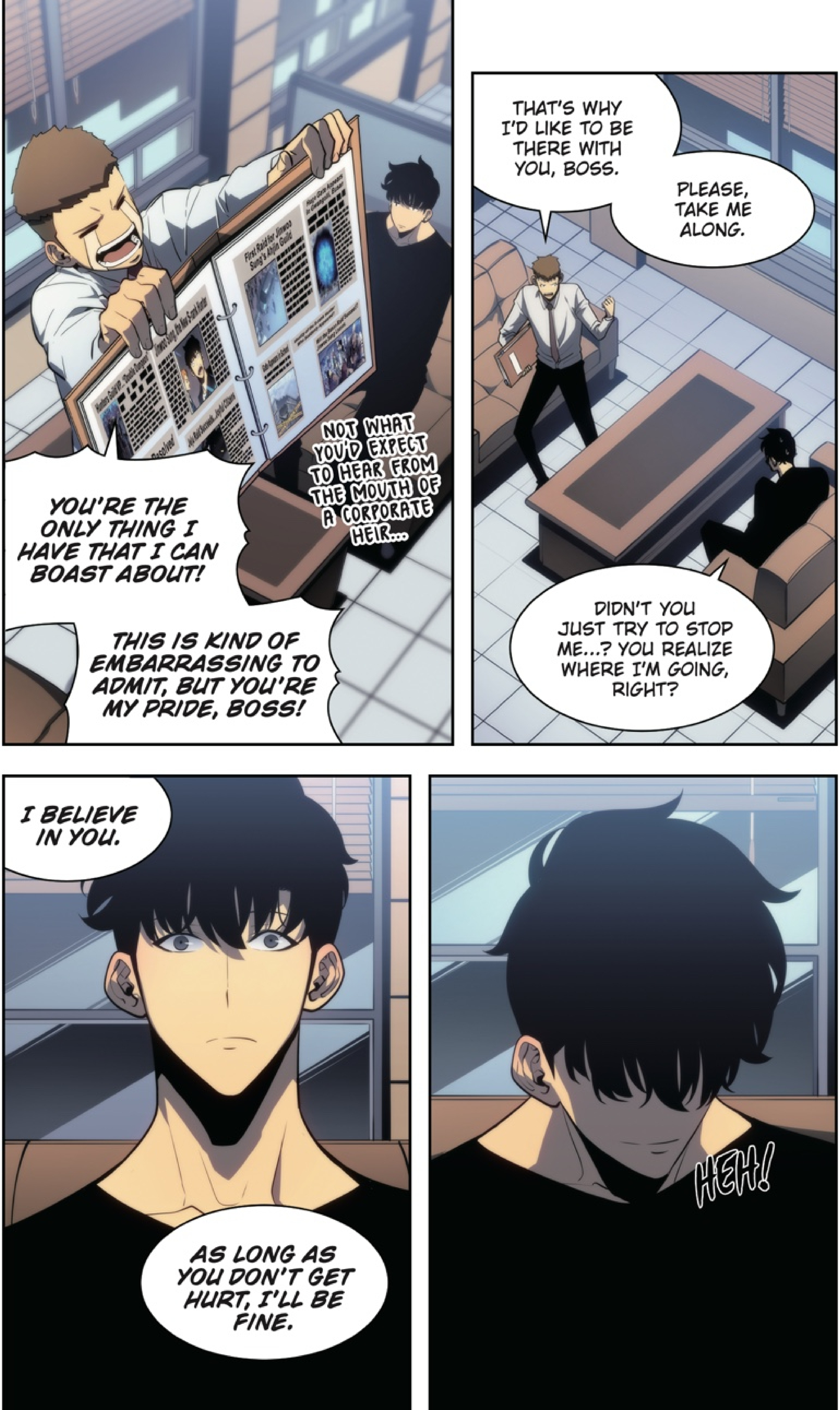
<More than that, look at the biggest one there—>
<Other giants have scattered in different directions, but it's blocking the gate.>
<I don't know if it's waiting for someone... or just guarding the gate.>
<Who knows?>

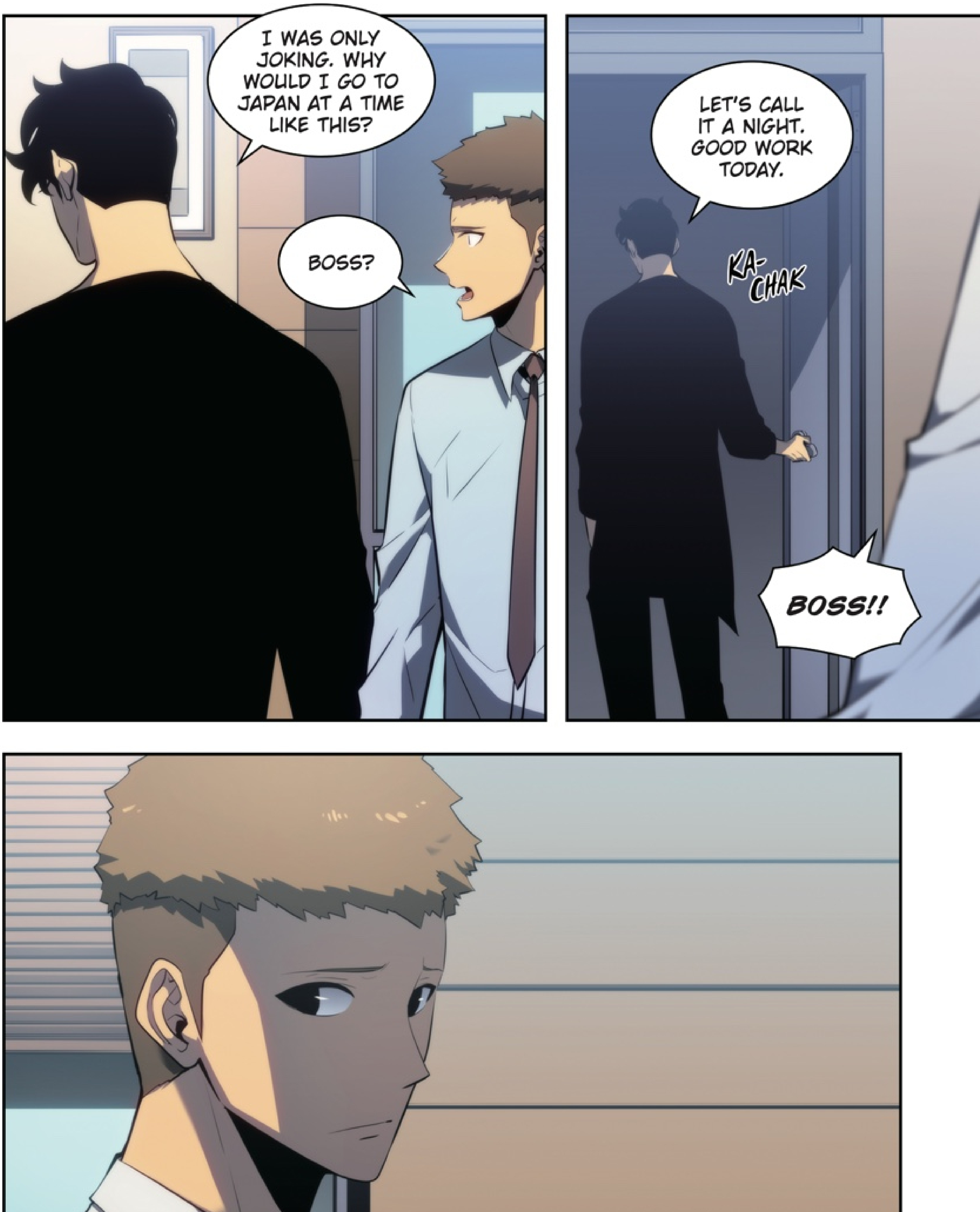
<This is just my own impression, but...>
<...it doesn't feel like it's alive.>
<Sure, it breathes and moves, but it seems more like a programmed machine.>
<A machine... If it were a machine, bombs would work on it.>
<Thirty-one giants came out of the gate and only two were killed.>
<How many days has it been since the dungeon break?>
<It's been two days.>
<Wonder if they can be stopped before they destroy everything...>

EXCUSE ME?!
ARE YOU SAYING YOU WANT TO GO TO JAPAN?!!
YOU SAW THE NEWS, DIDN'T YOU?
THE SCALE OF THAT GATE IS BEYOND JEJU ISLAND!
I'VE NEVER SEEN THAT KIND OF SUPER GIANT, BOSS!

IF I SUCCEED, AHJIN GUILD WILL BECOME FAMOUS.
STILL...
JINHO HAS ALWAYS TRUSTED AND FOLLOWED ME, BUT THIS IS DANGEROUS ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM WORRY.
CONSIDERING THIS TRAGEDY, IT'S—
I UNDERSTAND, BOSS.
I'LL GO WITH YOU!!

WHAT?!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
THE RED GATE ACCIDENT.
THE JEJU ISLAND RAID AND THE RECENT DOUBLE DUNGEON INCIDENT.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE NEWS COVERAGE HAS IN COMMON, BOSS?
WELL...
I'M NOT IN ANY OF IT, BOSS!
New S-rank Hunter
SHWP


YOU'RE THE ONLY THING I HAVE THAT I CAN BOAST ABOUT!
NOT WHAT YOU'D EXPECT TO HEAR FROM THE MOUTH OF A CORPORATE HEIR...
THIS IS KIND OF EMBARRASSING TO ADMIT, BUT YOU'RE MY PRIDE, BOSS!
THAT'S WHY I'D LIKE TO BE THERE WITH YOU, BOSS.
PLEASE, TAKE ME ALONG.
DIDN'T YOU JUST TRY TO STOP ME...? YOU REALIZE WHERE I'M GOING, RIGHT?
I BELIEVE IN YOU.
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T GET HURT, I'LL BE FINE.
HEH!

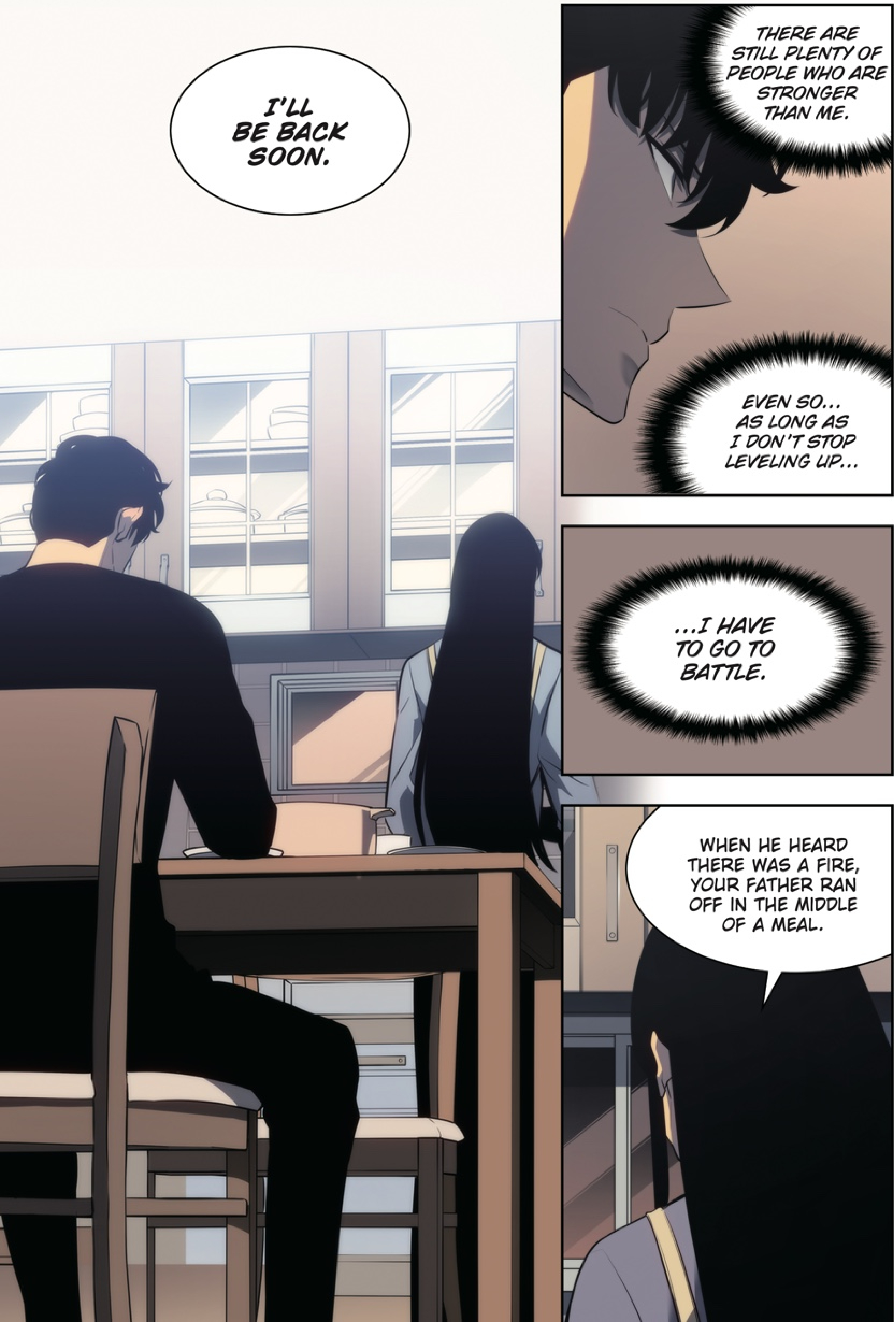

I WAS ONLY JOKING. WHY WOULD I GO TO JAPAN AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
BOSS?
LET'S CALL IT A NIGHT. GOOD WORK TODAY.
KA-CHAK
BOSS!!

ALTHOUGH I WASN'T ABLE TO USE THE SHADOW SOLDIERS...
...THE ARCHITECT WAS AT A SIMILAR LEVEL TO ME AT LEVEL 100.
THAT MEANS THERE ARE MORE OF THOSE WHO ARE ABOVE ME.
IT'S A WIDE WORLD. OF COURSE THERE ARE THOSE MORE POWERFUL THAN ME.
I SHOULDN'T FEEL LIKE I'M THE ONE WHO HAS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM.
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M A HERO.
I'M HOME.
IS THAT YOU, SON? YOU HAVEN'T EATEN YET, RIGHT?
DECI-SIONS...
HOW ABOUT JINAH?
SHE SAID SHE'S NOT HUNGRY.

RIGHT, I HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION.
I'M SORRY.
SHF
I CAN'T HELP YOU WITH THIS MATTER.
TH-THEN HOW WAS YOUR MOTHER CURED, HUNTER SUNG?
SIR, IF I KNEW HOW TO CURE THE SLEEPING DISEASE...
...AND I WANTED TO PROFIT FROM IT, THEN I WOULD'VE ALREADY DONE SO.
...I SEE.
TURN
WELL, THEN.

HAAH...
STILL, MR. YOO IS JINHO'S FATHER...
BUT I DON'T KNOW HIM PERSONALLY.
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT KIND OF PERSON CHAIRMAN YOO IS OR...
...WHETHER HE REALLY HAS THE ILLNESS OR HAS ANOTHER MOTIVE.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE IS IN LIMITED SUPPLY.
SO I HAVE TO BE SELECTIVE ABOUT USING IT.
THE CHAIRMAN'S OFFER WAS UNCONVENTIONAL, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO PERSUADE ME.
IF IT'S TIME TO MAKE SOME DECISIONS...
...I...
......
MOM.


I'LL BE BACK SOON.
THERE ARE STILL PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE STRONGER THAN ME.
EVEN SO... AS LONG AS I DON'T STOP LEVELING UP...
...I HAVE TO GO TO BATTLE.
WHEN HE HEARD THERE WAS A FIRE, YOUR FATHER RAN OFF IN THE MIDDLE OF A MEAL.

I'LL HELP YOU PACK AFTER DINNER.

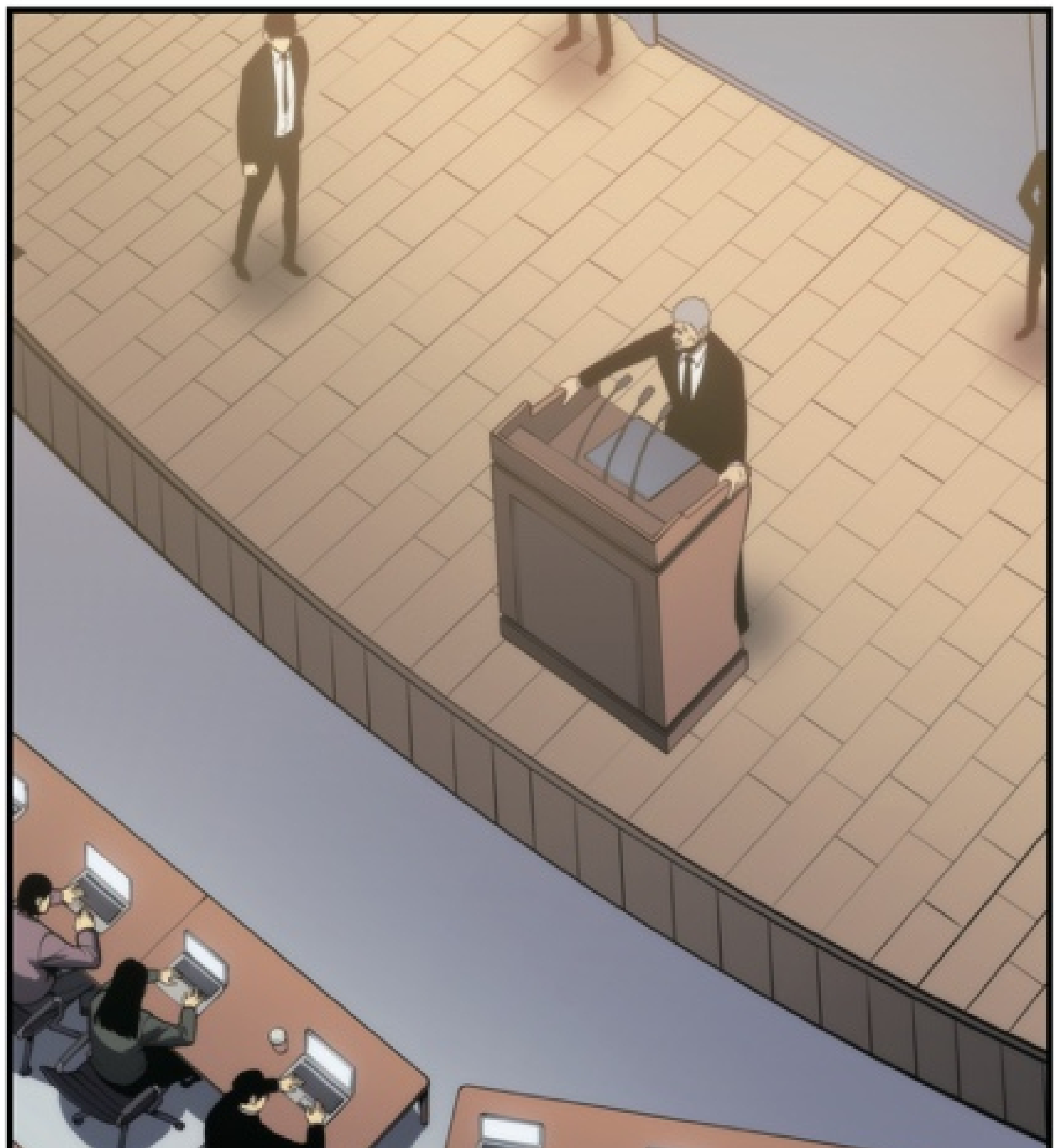
RUSTLE

JINAH, ARE YOU SLEEPING?
YEAH.
LET'S TALK.
I NEED TO SLEEP.
HOW SHOULD I START...?

I ALMOST GOT KILLED RECENTLY.
FWIP
......
NO, I MEAN...
...I FACE DEATH ALL THE TIME.
BUT I REALLY THOUGHT I COULD'VE BEEN KILLED THIS TIME.
IT WAS GETTING KINDA DICEY.
ANYWAY, I WAS ABLE TO SURVIVE.
WHENEVER I MAKE IT BACK HOME, I'M THANKFUL AND EVERY MOMENT I'M ALIVE IS PRECIOUS.
SO I'LL BE BACK THIS TIME AS WELL.
PAT

STROKE
THANK YOU...
...FOR NOT STOPPING ME FROM GOING TO RAIDS.
YOU WOULD GO ANYWAY.
VMM
YEAH. I'LL BE BACK.

DON'T WORRY.
I'LL KEEP YOU SAFE EVEN WHILE I'M FAR AWAY.



KASHAK
KASHAK
KASHAK
KASHAK
KASHAK

TMP
TMP
DANG...
HEH!

AHJIN

JINWOO SUNG
S-RANK
MASTER OF
AHJIN GUILD

JINHO YOO
D-RANK
VICE MASTER OF
AHJIN GUILD

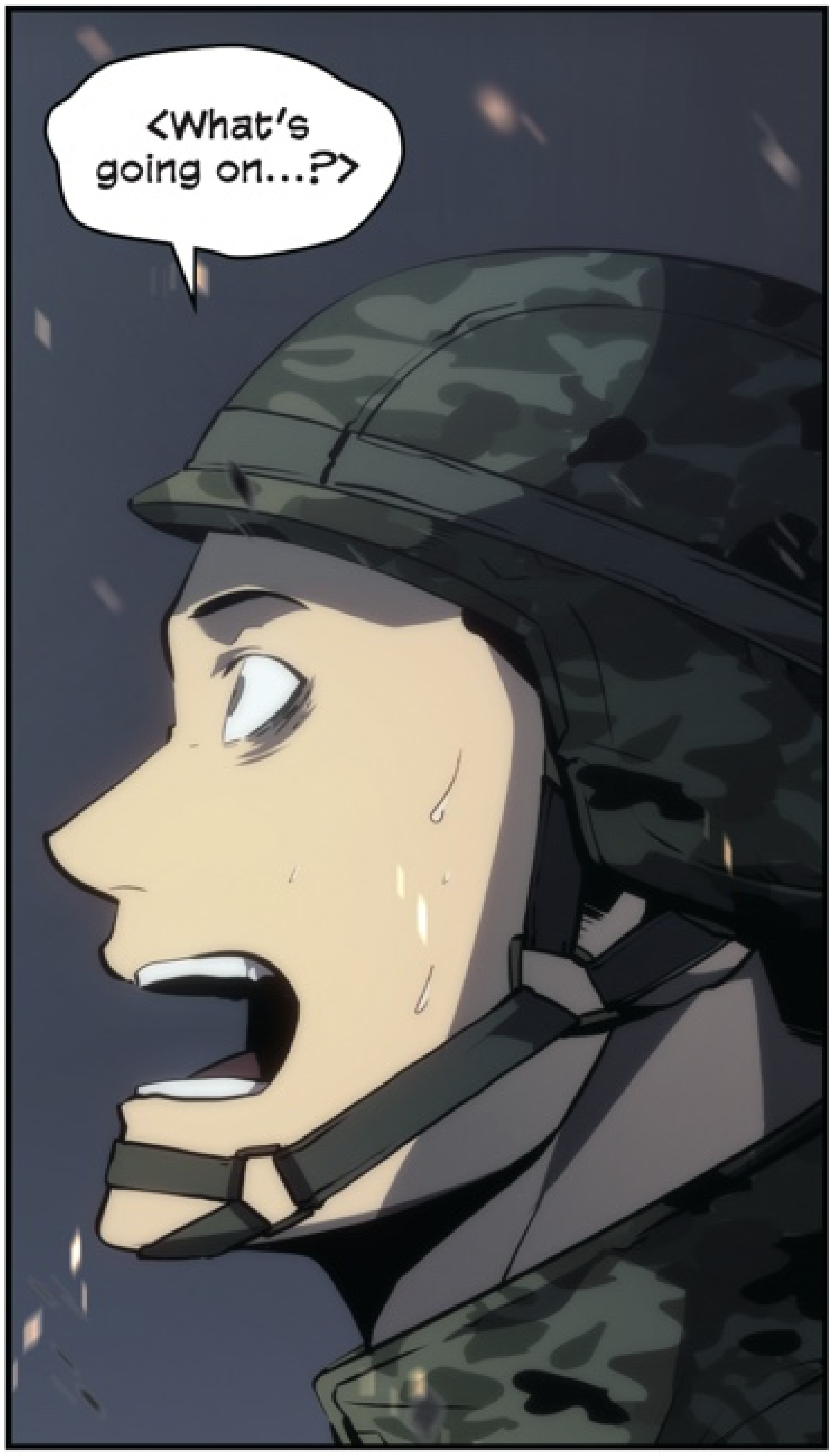
<We don't have room for all the patients!>
<We can take a maximum of three or four!>
<That can't be...! We have more than ten patients with mobility issues!>
<There's no time to worry about anyone already on death's door!>
<The giants are headed this way!>
<You'll die if you stay here!>
<I can't abandon my patients.>

<My wife and I promised we would stay by their sides to the end.>
<...I'll stay with you.>
RUMBLE
<I can't run away knowing there are civilians remaining.>
<For now, go inside—>
STOMP
RUMBLE

<I-it's a giant!! Fire!!>
RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-
TAT
WHOOSH
<No!!>
WHAM

CRAAASH
THUD

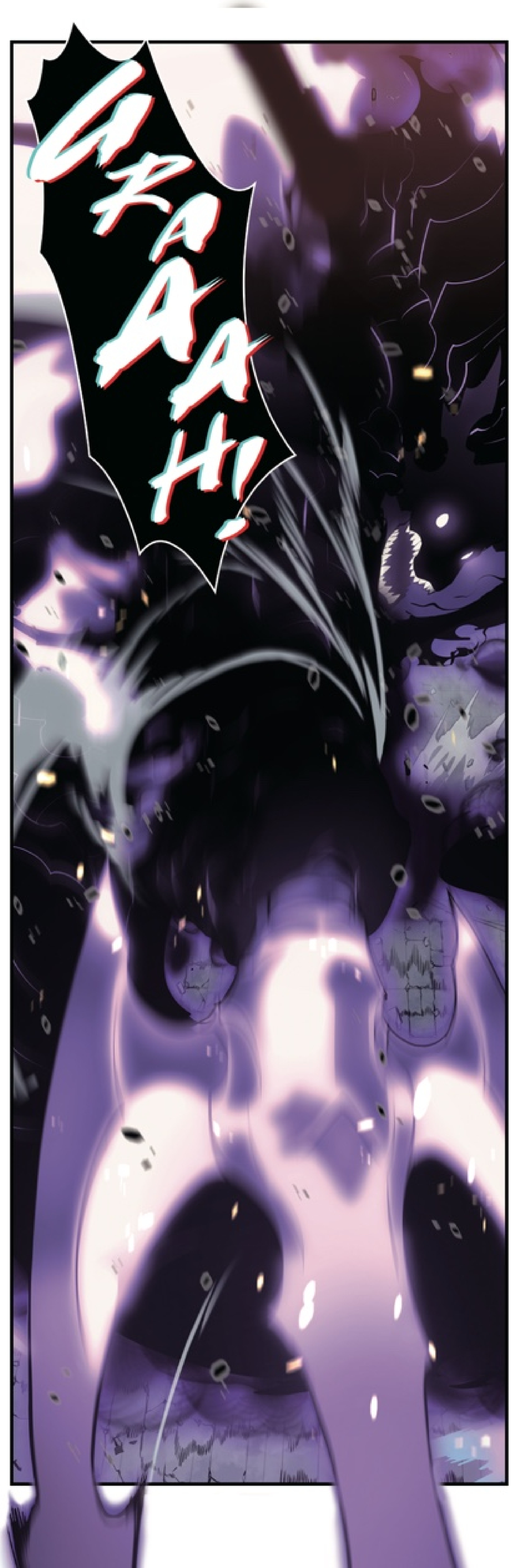
GRR...

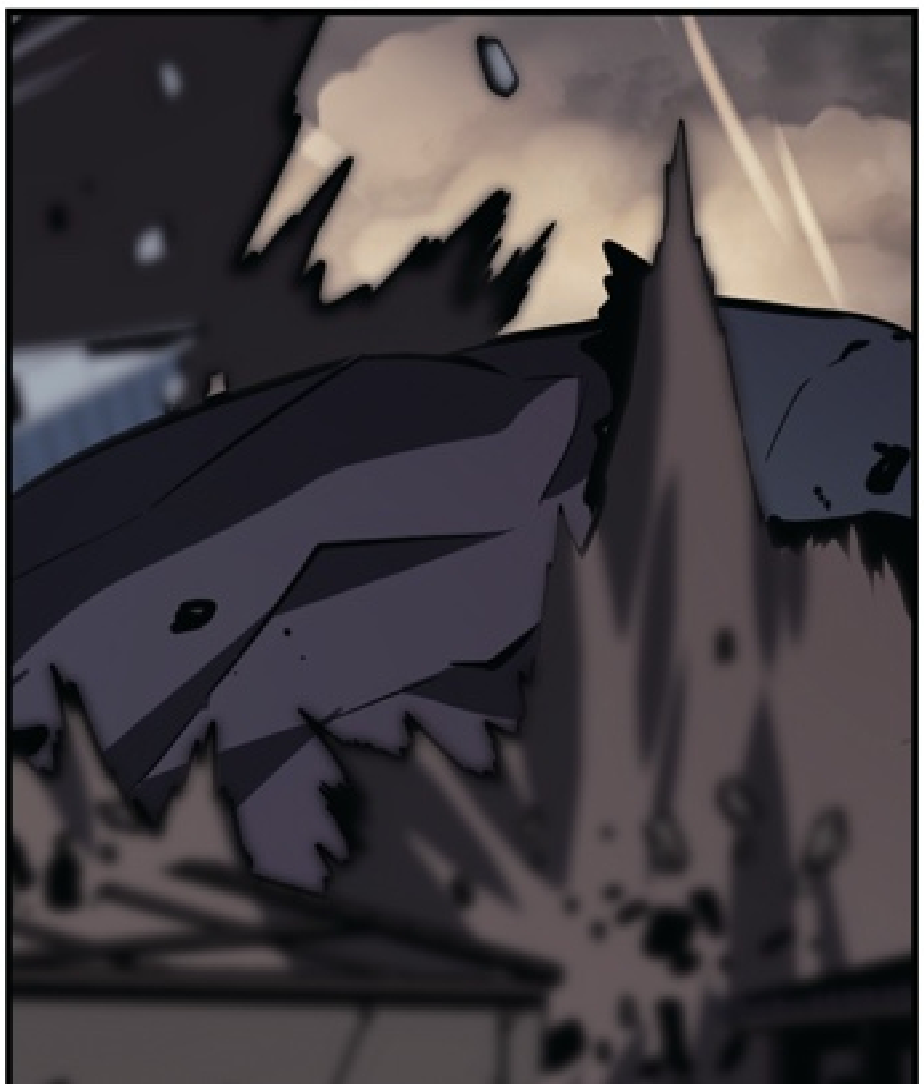

<What's going on...?>

IT'S TOO RISKY.
I NEED TO TAKE THIS ELSEWHERE. THIS IS TOO CLOSE TO THE HOSPITAL.

CRUMBLE
THUMP
THUD
I'LL HELP WITH THE EVACUATION WHILE I WAIT FOR YOU.

GOT IT.


URAAAH!

BAM


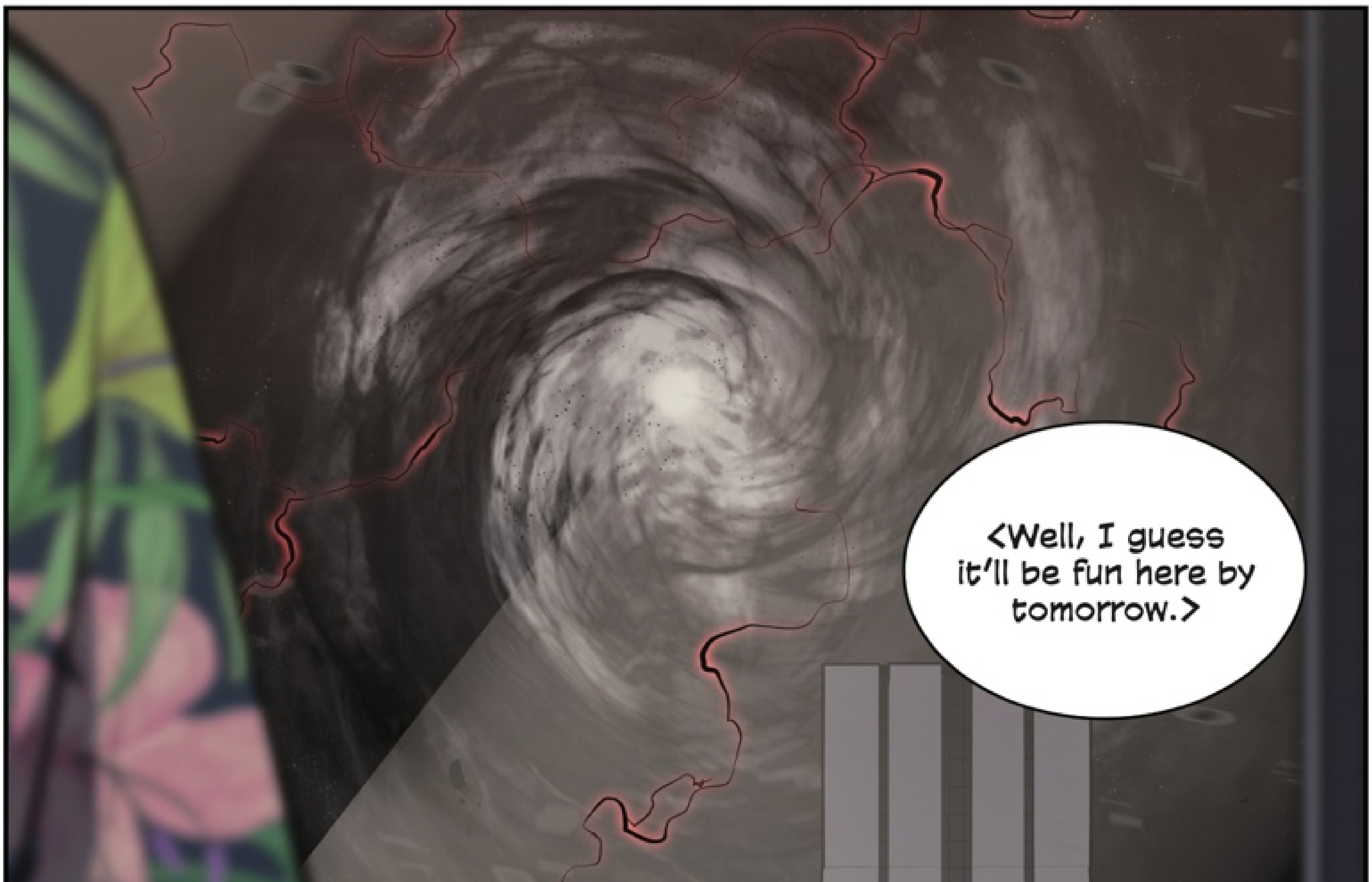
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
SW
ASH

MARYLAND, USA
<Oh, so Jinwoo Sung went to Japan, huh?>
<I hear that Ms. Sellner didn't upgrade his power. Not even a bit.>
<He'll die at his level.>
<All of us here have upgraded our power through Ms. Sellner...>
<...so we all know the limitations of an ordinary hunter's abilities.>
<He has been reawakened, though.>
<He must be full of himself.>

<Does he really think fighting insects is the same as fighting giants?>
<Overconfident hunters inevitably end up dead.>
<It's ironic that killing those ants will lead to his own doom.>
<I'll bet my yacht he gets killed the first day.>
PAUSE
<I'll bet my house he lasts two.>
<Okay, then—>
<You really think that'll happen?>
<I'll bet Scavenger Guild headquarters...>
<...that he survives.>

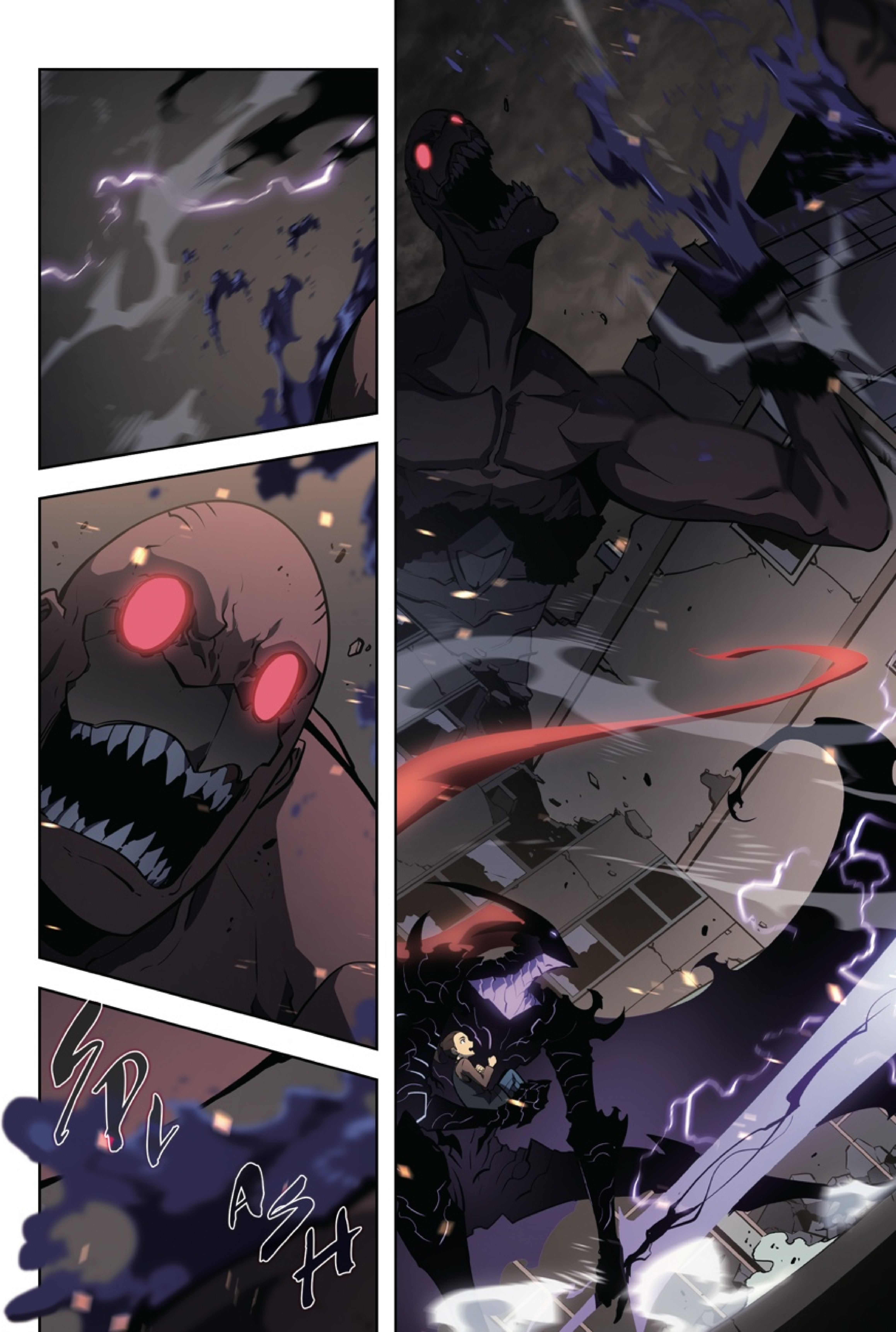
<Better you worry about the S-rank gate in the States than Hunter Sung.>
<The dungeon break is tomorrow. Wonder how many people here will survive.>
<That guy sure knows how to kill the mood.>
<Are you surprised? He's always like this. Never mind him.>

<It would've been more fun to do a raid in Japan than the U.S.>


<Well, I guess it'll be fun here by tomorrow.>

<Viewers ...!>
<You won't believe what I'm seeing now!>
<Hunter Sung's minions are attacking the giant!>
TAKA TAKA TAKA
<They're eating the giants!>
<The insects are eating the giants!>

<Eeeeek!!>
THUD
DASH
WHISH
ZZZZT


SPLASH

WHOOSH
GROAR!
SLAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM

GLARE
GROAAAR!
SMIRK
PAT
SHAKE

IRON... HE'S BEEN EXCITED SINCE LEVELING UP.
GLAD HE'S BEEN DOING HIS JOB WELL.
<Uhh... Thank you.>
<Thank you for sav—>
FWIP
YOU GO! BRAVE SOLDIER!!

<Ah... thank... you.>
JINHO, PLEASE TAKE HIM AND FINISH THE EVACUATION.
YES, BOSS!
HERE, HERE. LET'S GO.
NOW, THEN...

SHALL I GET STARTED?

FSHHH
ARISE.
TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 10...

VOLUME 10 PREVIEW
JINWOO SUNG AND HIS ARMY SAVE JAPAN!
HIS POWER IS...
...ON ANOTHER LEVEL.
CHARGE!
STOMP
STOMP
THE MASTER OF THE DUNGEON DEMANDS TO MAKE A DEAL!
WELCOME, MONARCH...
HE'S THE BOSS?
RELEASE ME...
...AND I SHALL HELP YOU.
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